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Selections from the

World's Devotional Classics

Volume VIII

Molinos to Law



Miguel de Molinos

Selections
from the
World's
Devotional
Classics

EDITED BY
Robert Scott and George W. Gilmore
Editors of The Homiletic Review

IN TEN VOLUMES

Volume VIII
Molinis to Law

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SELECTIONS FROM
The Spiritual Guide
BY
MIGUEL DE MOLINOS

MIGUEL DE MOLINOS

Founder of Spanish quietism; born at Saragossa, December 25, 1640; died at Rome December 28, 1697; educated at Coimbra, where he received his doctorate in 1669 or 1670. He settled at Rome, where through his personal piety he gained the friendship of distinguished ecclesiastics. In 1685 Molinos was placed under arrest because his doctrines were endangering the Church, and was kept in confinement in a Dominican monastery until his death. His fame rests on "The Spiritual Guide which Disentangles the Soul, and Brings it by the Inward Way to the Getting of Perfect Contemplation, and . . . Internal Peace" (English translation, London, 1688, and often). In this book he shows the way to inward peace; and that way is fourfold—prayer, obedience, frequent communions, and inward mortification.

**To the End God May Rest In the Soul,
the Heart Is Always to Be Kept Peace-
able In Whatsoever Disquiet, Tempta-
tions and Tribulation**

Thou art to know that thy soul is the center, habitation, and kingdom of God. That therefore, to the end the Sovereign King may rest on that throne of thy soul, thou oughtest to take pains to keep it clean, quiet, void, and peaceable: clean from guilt and defects; quiet from fears; void of affections, desires, and thoughts; and peaceable in temptations and tribulations.

Thou oughtest always, then, to keep thine heart in peace, that thou mayest keep pure that temple of God, and with a right and pure intention thou art to work, pray, obey, and suffer, without being in the least moved, whatever it pleases the Lord to send unto thee. Because it is certain that for the good of the soul and for thy spiritual profit he will suffer the envious enemy to trouble that city of rest, and throne of peace, with temptations, suggestions, and tribulations, and by the means of creatures with painful troubles, and grievous persecutions.

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Be constant, and cheer up thine heart in whatsoever disquiet these tribulations may cause to thee. Enter within it, that thou mayest overcome it, for therein is the divine fortress which defends, protects, and fights for thee. If a man hath a safe fortress, he is not disquieted tho his enemies pursue him, because, by his retreating within it, these are disappointed and overcome. The strong castle that will make thee triumph over all thine enemies, visible and invisible, and over all their snares and tribulations, is within thine own soul, because in it resides the divine aid and sovereign succor. Retreat within it, and all will be quiet, secure, peaceable, and calm.

It ought to be thy chief and continual exercise to pacify that throne of thy heart, that the Supreme King may rest therein. The way to pacify it will be to enter into thyself by means of internal recollection; all thy protection is to be prayer, and a loving recollection in the divine presence. When thou seest thyself more sharply assaulted, retreat into that region of peace, where thou wilt find the fortress. When thou art more faint-hearted, betake thyself to this refuge of prayer, the only armor for overcoming the enemy, and mitigating tribulation: thou oughtest not to be at a distance from it in a storm, to the end thou mayest, as another Noah, experience

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tranquility, security, and serenity, and to the end thy will may be resigned, devoted, peaceful and courageous.

Finally, be not afflicted nor discouraged to see thyself faint-hearted: he returns to quiet thee, that still he may stir thee, because this divine Lord will be alone with thee, to rest in thy soul and form therein a rich throne of peace; that within thine own heart, by means of internal recollection and with his heavenly grace, thou mayest look for silence in tumult, solitude in company, light in darkness, forgetfulness in pressures, vigor in despondency, courage in fear, resistance in temptation, peace in war, and quiet in tribulation.

Tho the Soul Perceibe Itself Deprived of Discourse, or Ratiocination, Yet It Dught to Persevere In Prayer, and Not to Be Afflicted, Because That Is Its Greater Felicity

Thou wilt find thyself, as all other souls that are called by the Lord to the inward way, full of confusion and doubts, because in prayer thou hast failed in discourse. It will seem to thee that God does no more assist thee as formerly; that the exercise of prayer is not in thy power; that thou lovest time,

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whilst hardly and with great trouble thou canst make one single ejaculation as thou wast wont to do.

How much confusion, and what perplexities will that want of enlarging thyself in mental discourse raise in thee! And if in such a juncture thou hast not a ghostly¹ father expert in the mystical way, thou wilt certainly conclude that thy soul is out of order, and that for the security of thy conscience thou standest in need of a general confession; and all that will be got by that care will be the shame and confusion of both. O how many souls are called to the inward way, and the spiritual fathers, for want of understanding their case, instead of guiding and helping them forward, stop them in their course and ruin them.

Thou oughtest then to be persuaded that thou mayest not draw back when thou wantest expansion and discourse in prayer, that it is thy greatest happiness, because it is a clear sign that the Lord will have thee to walk by faith and silence in his divine presence, which is the most profitable and easiest path; in respect that, with a simple view or amorous attention to God, the soul appears like a humble suppliant before its Lord or as an innocent child that casts itself into the sweet

¹ Spiritual.

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and safe bosom of its dear mother. Thus did Gerson express it: "Tho I have spent forty years in reading and prayer, yet I could never find anything more efficacious nor compendious for attaining to mystical theology, than that our spirit should become like a young child and beggar in the presence of God."

That kind of prayer is not only the easiest, but the most secure; because it is abstracted from the operations of the imagination, that is always exposed to the tricks of the devil, and the extravagances of melancholy and ratiocination, wherein the soul is easily distracted, and, being wrapt up in speculation, reflects on itself.

When God had a mind to instruct his own captain, Moses (Ex. 24), and give him the two tables of the law, written in stone, he called him up to the mountain, at what time, God being there with him, the mount was darkened and environed with thick clouds, Moses was standing idle, not knowing what to think or say. Seven days after, God commanded Moses to come up to the top of the mountain, wherein he showed him his glory, and filled him with great consolation.

So in the beginning, when God intends, after an extraordinary manner, to guide the soul into the school of the divine and loving notices of the internal law, he makes it go with

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darkness and dryness, that he may bring it near to himself; because the Divine Majesty knows very well that it is not by the means of one's own ratiocination or industry that a soul draws near to him, and understands the divine documents, but rather by silent and humble resignation.

The patriarch Noah gave a great instance of this; who after he had been by all men reckoned a fool, floating in the middle of a raging sea wherewith the whole world was overflowed, without sails and oars and environed with wild beasts that were shut up in the Ark, walked by faith alone, not knowing nor understanding what God had a mind to do with him.

What most concerns thee, O redeemed soul, is patience, not to desist from the prayer thou art about, tho thou canst not enlarge in discourse. Walk with firm faith and a holy silence, dying in thyself, with all thy natural industry, trusting that God, who is the same and changes not, neither can err, intends nothing but thy good. It is clear that he who is dying must needs feel it; but how well is time employed when the soul is dead, dumb, and resigned in the presence of God, there, without any clutter or distraction, to receive the divine influences.

The senses are not capable of divine bless-

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ings; hence if thou wouldst be happy and wise, be silent and believe, suffer and have patience, be confident and walk on; it concerns thee far more to hold thy peace and to let thyself be guided by the hand of God than to enjoy all the goods of this world. And tho it seem to thee that thou dost nothing at all, and art idle, being so dumb and resigned, yet it is of infinite fruit.

Consider the blinded beast that turns the wheel of the mill, which tho it see not neither know what it does, yet does a great work in grinding the corn; and altho it taste not of it, yet its master receives the fruit and tastes of the same. Who would not think during so long a time that the seed lies in the earth but that it were lost? Yet afterward it is seen to spring up, grow, and multiply. God does the same with the soul, when he deprives it of consideration and ratiocination. Whilst it thinks it does nothing, and is in a manner undone, in time it comes to itself again, improved, disengaged, and perfect, having never hoped for so much favor.

Take care then that thou afflict not thyself, nor draw back, tho thou canst not enlarge thyself, and discourse in prayer; suffer, hold thy peace, and appear in the presence of God; persevere constantly, and trust to his infinite bounty, who can give unto thee constant faith,

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true light, and divine grace. Walk as if thou wert blindfolded, without thinking or reasoning; put thyself into his kind and paternal hands, resolving to do nothing but what his divine will and pleasure is.

[Following chapters, omitted here, cover the same ground as the meditations and directions of Scupoli (Vol. 5, pp. 1, ff.)—dealing with mental disquiet, spiritual warfare, use of faith, silence, etc.]

The Difference Between the Outward and Inward Man

There are two sorts of spiritual persons, internal and external: these seek God without, by discourse, by imagination, and consideration: they endeavor mainly to get virtues by many abstinences, maceration of body, and mortification of the senses: they give themselves to rigorous penance; they put on sackcloth, chastise the flesh by discipline, endeavor silence, bear the presence of God, forming him present to themselves in their idea of him or their imagination, sometimes as a Pastor, sometimes as a Physician, and sometimes as a Father and Lord; they delight to be continually seeking of God, very often making fervent acts of love; and all this is art and meditation. By this way they desire to be great, and by the power of voluntary and exterior mortification they go in quest

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of sensible affections and warm sentiments, thinking that God resides only in them when they have them.

This is the external way and the way of beginners; and, tho it be good, yet there is no arriving at perfection by it; nay, there is not so much as one step toward it, as experience shows in many that, after fifty years of this external exercise, are void to God and full of themselves, having nothing of a spiritual man, but just the name of such.

There are others truly spiritual, who have passed by the beginnings of the interior way which leads to perfection and union with God; and to which the Lord called them by his infinite mercy from that outward way in which before they exercised themselves. These men retired in the inward part of their souls with true resignation into the hands of God, with a total putting off and forgetting even of themselves, do always go with a raised spirit to the presence of the Lord, by the means of pure faith, without image, form, or figure, but with great assurance founded in tranquility and rest internal, in whose infused meeting and entertainment the Spirit draws with so much force that it makes the soul draw inwardly the heart, the body, and all the powers of it.

The souls, as they are already passed by the

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interior mortification and have been cleared by God with the fire of tribulation, with infinite and horrible torments, all of them ordained by his hand, and after his way, are masters of themselves, because they are entirely subdued and denied, which makes them live with great repose and internal peace. And altho on many occasions they feel resistance and temptations, yet they become presently victorious, because being already souls of proof and endued with divine strength, the motions of passions can not last long upon them; and altho vehement temptations and troublesome suggestions of the enemy may persevere a long time about them, they are all conquered, with infinite gain, God being he that fights within them.

These souls have already procured themselves a greater light and a true knowledge of Christ our Lord, both of his divinity and his humanity. They exercise this infused knowledge with a quiet silence in the inward entertainment and the superior part of their souls, with a spirit free from images and external recollections, with a love that is pure and stript of all creatures; they are raised also from outward actions to the love of humanity and divinity; so much as they enjoy, they forget, and in all of it they find that they love their God with all their heart and spirit.

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These blessed and sublimated souls take no pleasure in anything of the world, but in contempt, and in being alone, and in being forsaken and forgotten by everybody. They live so disinterested and taken off, that tho they continually receive many supernatural graces, yet they are not changed, no, not at those inclinations, being just as if they had not received them, keeping always in the inmost of their hearts a great lowliness and contempt of themselves; always humbled in the depth of their own unworthiness and vile-ness. In the same manner they are always quiet, serene, and possest with evenness of mind in graces and favors extraordinary, as also in the most rigorous and bitter torments. There is no news that fears them, no success that makes them glad; tribulations never disturb them, nor the interior, continual, and divine communications make them vain and conceited; they remain always full of holy and filial fear, in a wonderful peace, constancy, and serenity.

In the external way they take care to do continual acts of all the virtues one after another, to get to the attainment of them. They pretend to purge imperfections with industries proportionable to destruction; they take care to root up interests one after another with a different and contrary exercise. But

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tho they endeavor never so much, they arrive at nothing; because we can not do anything which is not imperfection and misery.

But in the inward way and loving entertainment in the presence divine, as the Lord is he that works, virtue is established, interests are rooted up, imperfections are destroyed, and passions removed, which makes the soul free unexpectedly, and taken off, when occasions are represented, without so much as thinking of the good which God of his infinite mercy prepared for them.

It must be known that these souls, tho thus perfect (as they have the true light of God), yet by it they know profoundly their own miseries, weaknesses, and imperfections, and what they yet want to arrive at perfection, toward which they are walking; they are afflicted and abhor themselves; they exercise themselves in a loving fear of God and contempt of themselves, but with a true hope in God and disconfidence in themselves. The more they are humble with true contempt and knowledge of themselves, the more they please God, and arrive at a singular respect and veneration in his presence. Of all the good works that they do, and of all that they continually suffer, as well within as without, they make no manner of account before that divine presence.

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Their continual exercise is to enter into themselves, in God, with quiet and silence, because there is his center, habitation, and delight. They make a greater account of this interior retirement, than of speaking of God; they retire into that interior and secret center of the soul, to know God and receive his divine influence with fear and loving reverence; if they go out, they go out only to know and despise themselves.

But know that few are the souls which arrive at this happy state, because few there are that are willing to embrace contempt and suffer themselves to be refined and purified; upon which account, altho they are many that enter into this interior way, yet it is a rare thing for a soul to go on and not stick upon the entrance. The Lord said to a soul, This inward way is trod by few; it is so high a grace that none deserves it: few walk in it, because it is no other than a death of the senses; and few there be that are willing so to die and be annihilated; in which disposition this so sovereign a gift is founded.

Herewith thou wilt undeceive thyself, and perfectly know the great difference which there is between the external and internal way, and how different that presence of God is, which arises from meditation, from that which is infused and supernatural, arising

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from the interior and infused entertainment, and from passive contemplation; and lastly, you will know the great difference which is between the outward and inward man.

The Means of Obtaining Peace Internal Is Not the Delight of Sense; Not Spiritual Consolation, But the Denying of Self-love

It is the saying of St. Bernard, that to serve God is nothing else but to do good and suffer evil. He that would go to perfection by the means of sweetness and consolation is mistaken. You must desire no other consolation from God than to end your life for his sake, in the state of true obedience and subjection. Christ our Lord's way was not that of sweetness and softness, nor did he invite us to any such, either by his words or example, when he said: "He that will come after me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). The soul that would be united to Christ must be conformable to him, and follow him in the way of suffering.

Thou wilt scarce begin to relish the sweetness of divine love in prayer before the enemy with his deceitful craftiness will be

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kindling in thy heart desires of the desert and solitude, that thou mayest without anybody's hindrance spread the sails to continual and delightful prayers. Open thine eyes, and consider that this counsel and desire is not conformable to the true counsel of Christ our Lord, who has not invited us to follow the sweetness and comfort of our own will, but the denying of ourselves, saying, "Let him deny himself." As if he should say, he that will follow me and come unto perfection, let him part with his own will wholly; and, leaving all things, let him entirely submit to the yoke of obedience and subjection by means of self-denial, which is the truest cross.

There are many souls dedicated to God, which receive from his hand great thoughts, visions, and mental elevations, and yet for all that the Lord keeps from them the grace of working miracles, understanding hidden secrets, foretelling future contingencies, as he communicates these things to other souls which have constantly gone through tribulations, temptations, and the true cross, in the state of perfect humility, obedience, and subjection.

Oh, what a great happiness is it for a soul to be subdued and subject! what great riches is it to be poor! what a mighty honor to be despised! what a height is it to be beaten

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down! what a comfort is it to be afflicted! what a credit of knowledge is it to be reputed ignorant! and finally, what a happiness of happiness is it to be crucified with Christ! This is that lot which the apostle gloried in, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). Let others boast in their riches, dignities, delights, and honors; but to us there is no higher honor than to be denied, despised, and crucified with Christ.

But what a grief is this, that scarce is there one soul which prizes spiritual pleasures, and is willing to be denied for Christ, embracing his cross with love. "Many are called, few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14), says the Holy Ghost: many are they who are called to perfection, but few are they that arrive at it; because they are few who embrace the cross with patience, constancy, peace, and resignation.

To deny oneself in all things, to be subject to another's judgment, to mortify continually all inward passions, to annihilate oneself in all respects, to follow always that which is contrary to one's own will, appetite, and judgment, are things that few can do: many are those that teach them, but few are they that practise them.

Many souls have undertaken, and daily do undertake this way; and they persevere all

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the while they keep the sweet relish of their primitive fervor; but this sweetness and sensible delight is scarce done, but presently, upon the overtaking of a storm of trouble, temptation, and dryness (which are necessary things to help a man up the high mountain of perfection), they falter and turn back, a clear sign that they sought themselves and not God or perfection.

May it please God that the souls which have had light and been called to an inward peace, and by not being constant in dryness and tribulation and temptation have started back, may not be cast into outward darkness with him that had not on him a wedding garment; altho he was a servant, for not being acquiescent, giving himself up to self-love.

This monster must be vanquished, this seven-headed beast of self-love must be beheaded, in order to get up to the top of the high mountain of peace. This monster puts his head everywhere; sometimes it gets among relations which strangely hinder with their conversations, to which nature easily lets itself be led; sometimes it gets, with a good look of gratitude, into affection that is passionate and without restraint toward the confessor; sometimes into affection to most subtle spiritual vainglories and temporal ones and niceties of honor, which things stick very

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close; sometimes it cleaves to spiritual pleasures, staying even in the gifts of God and in his graces freely bestowed; sometimes it desires exceedingly the preservation of health with disguise to be used well—and its own profit and conveniences; sometimes it would seem well with very curious subtleties; and lastly, it cleaves with a notable propensity to its own proper judgment and opinion in all things, the roots of which are closely fixt in its own will. All these are effects of self-love, and if they be not denied, impossible it is that a man should ever get up to the height of perfect contemplation, to the highest happiness of the loving union, and the lofty throne of peace internal.

Maxims to Know a Simple, Humble, and True Heart

Encourage thyself to be humble, embracing tribulations as instruments of thy good; rejoice in contempt, and desire that God may be thy holy refuge, comfort, and protector.

None, let him be never so great in this world, can be greater than he that is in the eye and favor of God; and therefore the truly humble man despises whatever there is in the world, even to himself, and puts his only trust and repose in God. The truly humble man suf-

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fers quietly and patiently internal troubles; and he is the man that makes great way in a little time, like one that sails before the wind. The truly humble man finds God in all things; so that whatever contempt, injury, or affronts come to him by means of the creatures, he receives it with great peace and quiet internal, as sent from the divine hand, and loves greatly the instrument with which the Lord tries him.

He that is taken with praise is not yet arrived at profound humility, tho he does not desire praise, nor seek it, but rather avoids it; because, to an humble heart, praises are bitter crosses, altho it be wholly quiet and immovable.

He has no internal humility who doth not abhor himself, with a mortal but withal a peaceable and quiet hatred; but he will never come to possess this treasure who has not a low and profound knowledge of his own vileness, rottenness, and misery.

He that makes excuses and replies has not a simple and humble heart, especially if he does this with his superiors; because replies grow from a secret pride that reigns in the soul, and from thence proceeds the total ruin of it.

Perfidiousness supposes little submission, and this less humility; and both together they

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are the fuel of inquietness, discord, and disturbance.

The humble heart is not disquieted by imperfections, tho these grieve it to the soul, because they are against its loving Lord. Nor is he concerned that he can not do great things, for he always stands in his own nothingness and misery; nay, he wonders at himself that he can do anything of virtue, and presently thanks the Lord for it, with a true knowledge that it is God that doth all, and remains dissatisfied with what he does himself.

The truly humble man, tho he sees all, yet he looks upon nothing to judge it, because he judges ill only of himself. The truly humble man doth always find an excuse to defend him that mortifies him, at least in a sound intention. Who therefore would be angry with a man of good intention?

So much (nay more) doth false humility displease God, as true pride does; because that is hypocrisy besides.

The truly humble man, tho everything falls out contrary to him, is neither disquieted nor afflicted by it; because he is prepared, and thinks he deserves no less. He is not disquieted under troublesome thoughts, where-with the devil seeks to torment him, nor under temptations, tribulations, and desertions; but

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rather acknowledges his unworthiness, and is affected that the Lord chastises him by the devil's means, tho he be a vile instrument; all he suffers seems nothing to him, and he never doth a thing that he thinks worth any great matter.

He that is arrived at perfect and inward humility, altho he be disturbed at nothing, as one that abhors himself because he knows his imperfection in everything, his ingratitude and his misery, yet he suffers a great cross in enduring himself. This is the sign to know true humility of heart by. But the happy soul, which is gotten to this holy hatred of itself, lives overwhelmed, drowned, and swallowed up in the depths of its own nothingness, out of which the Lord raises him, by communicating divine wisdom to him, and filling him with light, peace, tranquility, and love.

Inward Solitude Is That Which Chiefly Brings a Man to the Purchase of Internal Peace

Know, that altho exterior solitude doth much assist for the obtaining internal peace, yet the Lord did not mean this, when he spake by his prophet (Hos. 2:14)—“I will bring

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her into solitude, and speak privately to her''; but he meant the interior solitude, which jointly conduces to the obtaining the precious jewel of peace internal. Internal solitude consists in the forgetting of the creatures, in disengaging oneself from them, in a perfect nakedness of all the affections, desires, thoughts, and one's own will. This is the true solitude, where the soul reposes with a sweet and inward serenity in the arms of its chiefest good.

Oh, what infinite room is there in a soul that is arrived at this divine solitude! Oh, what inward, what retired, what secret, what spacious, what vast distances are there within a happy soul that is once come to be truly solitary! There the Lord converses and communicates himself inwardly with the soul; there he fills it with himself, because it is empty; clothes it with light and with his love, because it is naked; lifts it up, because it is low; and unites it with himself, and transforms it, because it is alone.

O delightful solitude and cipher of eternal blessings! O mirror, in which the Eternal Father is always beheld! There is great reason to call thee solitude; for thou art so much alone that there is scarce a soul that looks after thee, that loves and knows thee. O divine Lord! How is it that souls do not go

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from earth to this glory? How come they to lose so great a good, through the only love and desire of created things? Blessed soul, how happy wilt thou be, if thou dost but leave all for God! Seek him only, breathe after none but him; let him only have thy sighs. Desire nothing, and then nothing can trouble thee; and if thou dost desire any good, how spiritual soever it be, let it be in such a manner that thou mayest not be disquieted if thou miss it.

If, with this liberty, thou wilt give thy soul to God, taken off from the world, free and alone, thou wilt be the happiest creature upon earth, because the Most High has his secret habitation in this holy solitude. In this desert and paradise is enjoyed the conversation of God; and it is only in this internal retirement that that marvelous, powerful, and divine voice is heard. If thou wouldst enter into this heaven of earth, forget every care and every thought; get out of thyself, that the love of God may live in thy soul. Live as much as ever thou canst abstracted from the creatures, dedicate thyself wholly to thy Creator, and offer thyself in sacrifice with peace and quietness of spirit. Know that the more the soul disrobes itself, the more way it makes into this interior solitude, and becomes clothed with God; and the more lonesome and

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empty of itself the soul gets to be, the more the divine Spirit fills it.

There is not a more blessed life than a solitary one; because in this happy life God gives himself all to the creature and the creature all to God, by an intimate and sweet union and love. Oh, how few are there that come to relish this true solitude!

To make the soul truly solitary, it ought to forget all the creatures, and even itself; otherwise it will never be able to make any near approach to God. Many men leave and forsake all things, but they do not leave their own liking, their own will, and themselves; and therefore these truly solitary ones are so few. Wherefore, if the soul does not get off from its own appetite and desire, from its own will, from spiritual gifts, and from repose even in the spirit itself, it never can arrive at this high felicity of internal solitude.

Go on, blessed soul! Go on, without stop, toward this blessedness of internal solitude. See how God calls thee to enter into thy inward center, where he will renew thee, change thee, fill thee, clothe thee, and show thee a new and heavenly kingdom, full of joy, peace, content, and serenity.

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In Which Is Shown What Infused and Passive Contemplation Is, and Its Wonderful Effects

You must know that when once the soul is habituated to internal recollection and acquired contemplation that we have spoken of; when once it is mortified, and desires wholly to be denied its appetites; when once it efficaciously embraces internal and external mortification, and is willing to die heartily to its passions and its own ways, then God uses to take it alone by itself, and raise it more than it knows to a complete repose, where he sweetly and inwardly infuses in it his light, his love, and his strength, enkindling and inflaming it with a true disposition to all manner of virtue.

There the divine spouse, suspending its powers, puts it to sleep in a most sweet and pleasant rest; there it sleeps, and quietly receives and enjoys (without knowing it) what it enjoys with a most lovely and charming calm. There the soul, raised and lifted up to this passive state, becomes united to its greatest good, without costing it any trouble or pains for this union. There, in that supreme region and sacred temple of the soul, that greatest good takes its complacency, mani-

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fects itself, and creates a relish from the creature in a way above sense and all human understanding. There also only the pure Spirit, who is God (the purity of the soul being incapable of sensible things), rules it, and gets the mastership of it, communicating to its illustrations and those sentiments which are necessary for the most pure and perfect union.

The soul, coming to itself again from these sweet and divine embracings, becomes rich in light and love, a mighty esteem of the divine greatness, and the knowledge of its own misery, finding itself all changed divinely, and disposed to embrace, suffer, and to practise perfect virtue.

A simple, pure, infused, and perfect contemplation therefore is a known and inward manifestation, which God gives of himself, of his goodness, of his peace, of his sweetness, whose object is God, pure, unspeakable, abstracted from all particular thoughts, within an inward silence. But it is God delightful, God that draws us, God that sweetly raises us in a spiritual and most pure manner; an admirable gift which the divine Majesty bestows to whom he will, as he will, when he will, and for what time he will, tho the state of this life be rather a state of the cross, of patience, of humility, and of suffering than of enjoying.

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Never wilt thou enjoy this divine nectar till thou art advanced in virtue and inward mortifications, till thou dost heartily endeavor to fix in thy soul a great peace, silence, forgetfulness, and internal solitude. How is it possible to hear the sweet, inward, and powerful voice of God in the midst of the noise and tumults of the creatures? And how can the pure spirit be heard in the midst of considerations and discourses of artifice? If the soul will not continually die in itself, denying itself to all these materialities and satisfactions, the contemplation can be no more but a mere vanity, a vain complacency and presumption.

God doth not always communicate himself with equal abundance in this sweetest and infused contemplation. Sometimes he grants this grace more than he doth at other times; and sometimes he expects not that the soul should be so dead and denied, because this gift being his mere grace, he gives it when he pleases and as he pleases; so that no general rule can be made of it, nor any rate set to his divine greatness; nay, by means of this very contemplation he comes to deny it, to annihilate and die.

Sometimes the Lord gives greater light to the understanding, sometimes greater love to the will. There is no need here for the soul to take any pains or trouble: it must

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receive what God gives it, and rest united, as he will have it: because his Majesty is Lord, and in the very time that he lays it asleep he possesses and fills it, and works in it powerfully and sweetly, without any industry or knowledge of its own; insomuch that before ever it is aware of this so great mercy, it is gained, convinced, and changed already.

The soul which is in this happy state hath two things to avoid—first, the activity of human spirit and interestedness. Our human spirit is unwilling to die in itself, but loveth to be doing and discoursing after its way, being in love with its own actions. A man had need to have a great fidelity, and, divesting himself of selfishness, to get a perfect and passive capacity of the divine influences; the continual habits of operating freely which it has are a hindrance to its annihilation.

Second, interestedness in contemplation itself. Thou must therefore procure in thy soul a perfect divesting of all which is not God, without seeking any other end or interest, within or without, but the divine will.

In a word, the manner that thou must use on thy part to fit thyself for this pure, passive, and perfect prayer is a total and absolute consignment of thyself into the hands

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of God, with a perfect submission to his most holy will, to be busied according to his pleasure and disposition, receiving what he ordains thee with an even and perfect resignation.

Thou must know that few be the souls which arrive at this infused and passive prayer; because few of them are capable of these divine influences, with a total nakedness and death of their own activity and power. Those only who feel it know that this perfect nakedness is acquired (by the help of God's grace) by a continual and inward mortification, dying to all its own inclinations and desires.

At no time must thou look at the effects which are wrought in thy soul, but especially herein; because it would be a hindrance to the divine operations which enrich it so to do; all that thou hast to do is to pant after indifference, resignation, forgetfulness; then, without thy being sensible of it, the greatest good will leave in thy soul a fit disposition for the practise of virtue, a true love of thy cross, of thy own contempt, of thy annihilation, and greater and stronger desires still of thy greater perfection and the most pure and affective union.

Of the Two Means Whereby the Soul Ascends Up to Infused Contemplation, With the Explication of What and How Many the Steps of It Are

The means whereby the soul ascends to the felicity of contemplation and affective love are two—the pleasure and the desires of it. God uses at first to fill the soul with sensible pleasures, because it is so frail and miserable that without this preventive consolation it can not take wing toward the fruition of heavenly things. In this first step it is disposed by contrition, and is exercised in repentance, meditating upon the Redeemer's passion, rooting out diligently all worldly desires and vicious courses of life; because the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the faint hearts and delicate never conquer it, but those that use violence and force with themselves.

The second is the desires. The more the things of heaven are delighted in, the more they are desired; and from thence there do ensue upon spiritual pleasures desires of enjoying heavenly and divine blessings and contempt of worldly ones. From these desires arises the inclination of following Christ our Lord, who said, "I am the way" (John 14: 6). The steps of his imitation by which a

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man must go up are charity, humility, meekness, patience, poverty, self-contempt, the cross, prayer, and mortification.

The steps of infused contemplation are three. The first is satiety. When the soul is filled with God it conceives a hatred to all worldly things; then it is quiet and satisfied only with divine love. The second is intoxication. And this step is an excess of mind and an elevation of soul arising from divine love and satiety of it. The third is security. This step turns out all fear: The soul is so drenched with love divine, and resigned up in such a manner to the divine good pleasure, that it would go willingly to hell if it did but know it so to be the will of the Most High. In this step it feels such a certain bond of the divine union that it seems to it an impossible thing to be separated from its beloved and his infinite treasure.

There are six other steps of contemplation, which are these: fire, union, elevation, illumination, pleasure, and repose. With the first the soul is enkindled, and, being enkindled, is anointed; being anointed, is raised; being raised, contemplates; contemplating, it receives pleasure; and, receiving pleasure, it finds repose. By these steps the soul rises higher, being abstracted and experienced in the spiritual and internal way.

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In the first step, which is fire, the soul is illustrated by the means of a divine and ardent ray, enkindling the affections divine and drying up those which are but human. The second is the unction, a sweet and spiritual liquor which, diffusing itself all the soul over, teaches it, strengthens it, and disposes it to receive and contemplate the divine truth; and sometimes it extends even to nature itself, corroborating it by patience with a sensible pleasure that seems celestial.

The third is the elevation of the inner man over itself, that it may get fittest to the clear fountain of pure love.

The fourth step, which is illumination, is an infused knowledge, whereby the soul contemplates sweetly the divine truth, rising still from one clearness to another, from one light to another, from knowledge to knowledge, being guided by the Spirit divine.

The fifth is a savory pleasure of the divine sweetness issuing forth from the plentiful and precious fountain of the Holy Ghost.

The sixth is a sweet and admirable tranquility, arising from the conquest of fighting within and frequent prayer; and this very few have experience of. Here the abundance of joy and peace is so great that the soul seems to be in a sweet sleep, solacing and reposing itself in the divine breast of love.

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Signs to Know the Inner Man and the Mind That Is Purged

The signs to know the inner man by are four. The first, if the understanding produce no other thoughts than those which stir up to the light of faith; and the will is so habituated that it begets no other acts of love than of God, and in order to him. The second, if, when he ceases from an external work in which he was employed, the understanding and the will are presently and easily turned to God. The third, if, in entering upon prayer, he forgets all outward things as if he had not seen or used them. The fourth, if he carries himself orderly toward outward things as if he were entering into the world again, fearing to embroil himself in business and naturally abhorring it, unless when charity requires it of him.

Such a soul as this is free from the outward man, and easier enters into the interior solitude where it sees none but God, and itself in him, loving him with quiet and peace and true love. There, in that secret center, God is kindly speaking to it, teaching it a new kingdom, and true peace and joy.

This spiritual, abstracted, and retired soul hath its peace no more broken, tho outwardly it may meet with combats; because through

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the infinite distance tempests do never reach to that serenest heaven within, where pure and perfect love resides; and tho sometimes it may be naked, forsaken, fought against, and desolate, this is the only fury of the storm, which threatens and rages nowhere but without.

This secret love within hath four effects. The first is called enlightenment, which is a savory and experimental knowledge of the greatness of God and of its own nothingness. The second is enkindling, which is an ardent desire of being burned, like the salamander, in this kind and Divine fire. The third is sweetness, which is a peaceable, joyful, sweet, and intimate fruition. The fourth is a swallowing up of the powers in God, by which immersion the soul is so much drenched and filled with God that it can not any longer seek, desire, or will anything but its greatest and infinite good.

From this fullest satiety two effects arise. The first is a great courage to suffer for God; the second is a certain hope or assurance that it can never lose him nor be separated from him.

Here in this internal retirement the beloved Jesus hath his paradise, to whom we may go up, standing and conversing on the earth. And if thou desirest to know who he is who is

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altogether drawn to this inward retirement, with enlightened exemplification in God, I tell thee it is he that in adversity, in discomfort of spirit, and in the want of necessities stands firm and unshaken. These constant and inward souls are outwardly naked and wholly infused in God, whom they continually do contemplate; they have no spot; they live in God and of himself; they shine brighter than a thousand suns; they are beloved by the Son of God; they are the darlings of God the Father, and elect spouses of the Holy Ghost.

By three signs is a mind that is purged to be known, as St. Thomas says in a treatise of his: The first sign is diligence, which is a strength of mind that banishes all neglect and sloth, that it may be disposed with earnestness and confidence to the pursuit of virtue. The second is severity, which likewise is a strength of mind against concupiscence, accompanied with an ardent love of deprivation, lack of comforts, and holy poverty. The third is benignity and sweetness of mind, which drives away all rancour, envy, aversion, and hatred against one's neighbor.

Till the mind be purged, the affection purified, the memory naked, the understanding brightened, the will denied and set afire, the soul can never arrive at the intimate and affective union with God; and, therefore, because

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the spirit of God is purity itself, and light and rest, the soul (where he intends to make his abode) must have great purity, peace, attention, and quiet. Finally, the precious gift of a purged mind those only have who with continual diligence seek, love, and retain it, and desire to be reputed the most vile in the world.

Of Divine Wisdom

Divine wisdom is an intellectual and infused knowledge of the divine perfections and things eternal, which ought rather to be called contemplation than speculation. Science is acquired, and begets the knowledge of nature; wisdom is infused, and begets the knowledge of the divine goodness; that desires to know what is not to be attained unto without pain and sweat; this desires not to know what it doth know, altho it understands it all. In a word, the men who are scientific entertain themselves in the knowledge of the things of the world; and the wise lives swallowed up in God himself.

Reason enlightened in the wise is a high and simple elevation of spirit, whereby he sees with a clear and sharp sight all that is inferior to him and what concerns his life and estate. This is that which renders the soul simple, full of vision, uniform, spiritual, and altogether

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introverted and abstracted from every created thing. This moves and draws away, with a sweet violence, the hearts of the humble and teachable, filling them with abundance of sweetness, peace, and pleasantness. Finally, the wise man says of it, that it brought him all good things at once: "All good things together came to me with her" (Wisd. of Sol. 7:11).

You must know that the greatest part of men live by opinion and judge according to the deceivableness of imagination and sense; but the man who is wise judges of everything according to the real verity which is in it; whose business is to understand, conceive, penetrate into, and transcend every created being, even to himself.

It is a great property in a wise man to do much and say little.

Wisdom is discovered in the works and words of the wise; because he, being absolute master of all passions, motions, and affections, is known in all his doings, like a quiet and still water, in which wisdom shines with clearness.

The understanding of mystical truths is secret and shut up from men, who are purely scholastical, unless they be humble; because it is the science of saints, and none know it but those who heartily love and seek their own

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contempt. Therefore the souls, who, by embracing this means, get to be purely mystical and truly humble, dive even to the profoundest apprehensions of the divinity; and the more sensually men do live, according to flesh and blood, the greater distance are they at from this mystical science.

Ordinarily it is seen that in the man who hath much scholastical and speculative knowledge divine wisdom doth not predominate; yet they make an admirable composition when they both meet together. The men of learning, who by God's mercy have attained to this mystic science, are worthy of veneration and praise in religion.

The external actions of the mystical and wise, which they do rather passively than actively, tho they are a great torment to them, yet are ordered prudently by them by number, weight, and measure.

The sermons of men of learning who want the spirit, tho they are made up of divers stories, elegant descriptions, acute discourses, and exquisite proofs, yet are by no means the word of God, but the word of men platted over with false gold. These preachers spoil Christians, feeding them with wind and vanity; and so they are, both of them, avoid of God.

These teachers feed their hearers with the

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wind of hurtful subtleties, giving them stones instead of bread, leaves instead of fruit, and unsavory earth mixed with poisoned honey instead of true food. These are they that hunt after honor, raising up an idol of reputation and applause, instead of seeking God's glory and the spiritual edification of men.

Those that preach with zeal and sincerity preach for God; those that preach without them preach for themselves. Those that preach the word of God with spirit make it take impression in the heart; but those that preach it without spirit carry it no further than to the ear.

Perfection doth not consist in teaching it, but in doing it; because he is neither the greatest saint nor the wisest man that knows the truth most, but he that practises it.

It is a constant maxim that divine wisdom begets humility; and that which is acquired by the learned begets pride.

Holiness does not consist in forming deep and subtle conceits of the knowledge and attributes of God, but in the love of God and in self-denial. Therefore it is more frequently observed that holiness is more among the simple and humble than among the learned. How many poor old women are there in the world who have little or nothing of human science, but are rich in the love of God! How

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many divines do we see that are over head and ears in their vain wisdom, and yet very bare in things of true light and charity!

Remember that it is always good to speak like one that learns, and not like one that knows. Count it a greater honor to be reputed a mere ignoramus than a man of wisdom and prudence.

However, the learned who are purely speculative have some little sparks of spirit, yet these do not fly out from the simple bottom of eminent and divine wisdom, which hath a mortal hatred to forms and species. The mixing of a little science is always a hindrance to the eternal, profound, pure, simple, and true wisdom.

There are two ways which lead to the knowledge of God—the one remote, the other near. The first is called speculation, the second contemplation. The learned, who follow scientific speculation by the sweetness of sensible discourses get up to God by this means, as well as they can, that by this help they may be able to love him; but none of those who follow that way which they call scholastic ever arrives by that only to the mystical way, or to the excellence of union, transformation, simplicity, light, peace, tranquility, and love, as he doth who is brought

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by the divine grace, by the mystical way of contemplation.

These men of learning who are merely scholastic, knowing not what the Spirit is, nor what it is to be lost in God; nor are they come yet to the taste of the sweet ambrosia which is in the inmost depth and bottom of the soul, where it keeps its throne and communicates itself with incredible, intimate, and delicious affluence. Nay, some there are who do even condemn this mystical science, because they neither understand nor relish it.

The divine who doth not taste the sweetness of contemplation has no other reason to be given for it, but because he enters not by the gate which St. Paul points to, when he says, "If any man thinketh that he is wise . . . , let him become a fool, that he may become wise" (1 Cor. 3:18). If any one among you seem to himself to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise; let him show his humility by reputed himself ignorant.

It is a general rule, and also a maxim in mystic theology, that the practise ought to be gotten before the theory; that there ought to be some experimental exercise of supernatural contemplation before a search of the knowledge and an inquiry after the full apprehension of it.

Altho the mystical science does commonly

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belong to the humble and simple, yet, notwithstanding that, men of learning are not incapable of it, if they do not seek themselves nor set any great value upon their own artificial knowledge; but more, if they can forget it, as if they never had it, and make use of it only in its own proper place and time, for preaching and disputing when their turn comes, and afterward give their minds to the simple and naked contemplation of God without form, figure, or consideration.

The study, which is not ordered for God's glory only, is but a short way to hell; not through the study, but through the wind of pride which begets it. Miserable is the greatest part of men at this time, whose only study is to satisfy the unsatisfiable curiosity of nature.

Many seek God, and find him not; because they are more moved by curiosity than sincere, pure, and upright intention. They rather desire spiritual comforts than God himself; and as they seek him not with truth, they neither find God nor spiritual pleasures.

He that does not endeavor the total denying of himself will not be truly abstracted, and so can never be capable of the truth and the light of the spirit. To go toward the mystical science, a man must never meddle with things which are without except with prudence and

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in that which his office calls him to. Rare are the men who set a higher price upon hearing than speaking. But the wise and purely mystical man never speaks but when he can not help it; nor doth he concern himself in anything but what belongs to his office, and then he carries himself with great prudence.

The spirit of divine wisdom fills men with sweetness, governs them with courage, and enlightens those with excellence who are subject to its direction. Where the divine Spirit dwells there is always simplicity and a holy liberty. But craft and double-mindedness, fiction, artifices, policy, and worldly respects are hell itself to wise and sincere men.

Know that he who would attain to the mystical science must be denied and taken off from five things. First, from the creatures. Secondly, from temporal things. Thirdly, from the very gifts of the Holy Ghost. Fourthly, from himself. Fifthly, he must be lost in God. This last is the completest of all; because that soul only that knows how to be so taken off attains to being lost in God, and alone knows where to be in safety.

God is more satisfied with the affection of the heart than that of worldly science. It is one thing to cleanse the heart of all that which captivates and pollutes it, and another thing to do a thousand things, tho good and holy,

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without minding that purity of heart which is the main of all for attaining of divine wisdom.

Never wilt thou get to this sovereign and divine wisdom if thou hast not strength, when God cleanseth thee in his own time, not only of thy adherences to temporal and natural blessings, but further to supernatural and sublime ones, such as internal communications, ecstasies, rapture, and other gratuitous graces, whereon the soul rests and entertains itself.

Many souls come short of arriving to quiet contemplation, to divine wisdom, and to true knowledge, notwithstanding that they spend many hours in prayer and receive the sacrament every day; because they do not subject and submit themselves wholly and entirely to him that hath light, nor deny and conquer themselves, nor give up themselves totally to God, with a perfect divesting and disinteresting of themselves; in a word, till the soul be purified in the fire of inward pain, it will never get to a state of renovation, of transformation, of perfect contemplation, of divine wisdom, and affective union.

SELECTIONS FROM
**A Short and Very Easy Method
of Prayer**

BY
MADAM GUYON

JEANNE MARIE BOUVIER DE LA MOTTE GUYON

French mystical writer of the Quietist school, born at Montargis April 13, 1648; died at Blois June 9, 1717. Her earliest education was received in convents. When not quite sixteen years of age she was married to a rich man twenty-two years her senior, Jacques Guyon, Seigneur de Chesnay. She was unhappy in the worldly and otherwise uncongenial atmosphere of her husband's house, and her only consolation was to maintain unbroken communion with God; but she found it difficult to live a life of prayer until a young Franciscan spoke the words which were to direct her whole life: "Your trouble comes from seeking externally what all the time is within you. Accustom yourself to seek God in your own heart, and you will find him there." From this time she began the methodical practise of ascetic usages. In 1680 she went to Paris. It was reported to the king that Madam Guyon was a supporter of the Quietistic mysticism, and held meetings of a prohibited sort. By royal order she was arrested and confined in a convent of the Visitation (Jan. 29, 1688); but Madame de Maintenon procured her release. On December 28th, she was again imprisoned, first at Vincennes and afterward in the bastille. She remained in confinement until either 1700 or 1702. Among her works are: "Short and Easy Method of Prayer" (rev. trans., London, 1902); her autobiography in three volumes (Cologne, 1720); "Le Cantique des cantiques, interprété selon le sens mystique" (Grenoble, 1685); and her version of the Bible with notes and reflections (Les Torrens spirituels, 30 vols., Cologne, 1713-15).



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I

Introduction That All Are Called to Prayer, and By the Aid of Ordinary Grace May Put Up the Prayer of the Heart, Which Is the Great Means of Salvation, and Which Can Be Offered At All Times, and By the Most Uninstructed

1. All are capable of prayer, and it is a dreadful misfortune that almost all the world have conceived the idea that they are not called to prayer. We are all called to prayer, as we are all called to salvation.

Prayer is nothing but the application of the heart to God, and the internal exercise of love. St. Paul has enjoined us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), and our Lord bids us watch and pray (Mark 13:33, 37): all therefore may, and all ought to practise prayer. I grant that meditation is attainable but by few, for few are capable of it; and therefore, my beloved brethren who are athirst for salvation, meditative prayer is not the prayer which God requires of you, nor which we would recommend.

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2. Let all pray: you should live by prayer, as you should live by love. "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that ye may be rich" (Rev. 3:8). This is very easily obtained, much more easily than you can conceive.

Come all ye that are athirst to the living waters, nor lose your precious moments in hewing out cisterns that will hold no water (John 7:37; Jer 2:13). Come ye famishing souls, who find naught to satisfy you; come, and ye shall be filled! Come, ye poor afflicted ones, bending beneath your load of wretchedness and pain, and ye shall be consoled! Come, ye sick, to your physician, and be not fearful of approaching him because ye are filled with diseases; show them, and they shall be healed!

Children, draw near to your Father, and he will embrace you in the arms of love! Come ye poor, stray, wandering sheep, return to your Shepherd! Come, sinners, to your Savior! Come ye dull, ignorant, and illiterate, ye who think yourselves the most incapable of prayer! ye are more peculiarly called and adapted thereto. Let all without exception come, for Jesus Christ hath called all.

Yet let not those come who are without a heart; they are excused; for there must be a heart before there can be love. But who is

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without a heart? O come, then, give this heart to God; and here learn how to make the donation.

3. All who are desirous of prayer may easily pray, enabled by those ordinary graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit which are common to all men.

Prayer is the key to perfection, and the sovereign good; it is the means of delivering us from every vice, and obtaining us every virtue; for the one great means of becoming perfect is to walk in the presence of God. He himself hath said, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). It is by prayer alone that we are brought into his presence, and maintained in it without interruption.

4. You must, then, learn a species of prayer which may be exercised at all times; which does not obstruct outward employments; which may be equally practised by princes, kings, prelates, priests and magistrates, soldiers, and children, tradesmen, laborers, women, and sick persons; it is not the prayer of the head, but of the heart.

It is not a prayer of the understanding alone, for the mind of man is so limited in its operations that it can have but one object at a time; but it is the prayer of the heart which is not interrupted by the exercises of reason. Nothing can interrupt this prayer but dis-

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ordered affections; and when once we have enjoyed God and the sweetness of his love, we shall find it impossible to relish aught but himself.

5. Nothing is so easily obtained as the possession and enjoyment of God. He is more present to us than we are to ourselves. He is more desirous of giving himself to us than we are to possess him; we only need to know how to seek him, and the way is easier and more natural to us than breathing.

Ah! ye who think yourselves so dull and fit for nothing, by prayer you may live on God himself with less difficulty or interruption than you live on the vital air. Will it not then be highly sinful to neglect prayer? But doubtless you will not, when you have learned the method, which is the easiest in the world.

II

1. **First Degree of Prayer, Practised In Two Ways; One By Reading and Meditation, the Other by Meditation Alone**
- 2, 3. **Rules and Methods of Meditation**
4. **Remedies for Its Difficulties**

1. There are two ways of introducing a soul into prayer, which should be pursued for some

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time; the one is meditation, the other is reading accompanied by meditation.

Meditative reading is the choosing some important practical or speculative truth, always preferring the practical, and proceeding thus: whatever truth you have chosen, read only a small portion of it, endeavoring to taste and digest it, to extract the essence and substance of it, and proceed no farther while any savor or relish remains in the passage: then take up your book again, and proceed as before, seldom reading more than half a page at a time.

It is not the quantity that is read, but the manner of reading, that yields us profit. Those who read fast reap no more advantage than a bee would by only skimming over the surface of the flower, instead of waiting to penetrate into it and extract its sweets. Much reading is rather for scholastic subjects than divine truths; to receive profit from spiritual books, we must read as I have described; and I am certain that if that method were pursued, we should become gradually habituated to prayer by our reading, and more fully disposed for its exercise.

2. Meditation, which is the other method, is to be practised at an appropriated season, and not in the time of reading. I believe that the best manner of meditating is as follows:

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When by an act of lively faith you are placed in the presence of God, read some truth wherein there is substance; pause gently thereon, not to employ the reason, but merely to fix the mind; observing that the principal exercise should ever be the presence of God, and that the subject, therefore, should rather serve to stay the mind, than exercise it in reasoning.

Then let a lively faith in God immediately present in our inmost souls produce an eager sinking into ourselves, restraining all our senses from wandering abroad: this serves to extricate us, in the first instance, from numerous distractions, to remove us far from external objects, and to bring us nigh to God, who is only to be found in our inmost center, which is the holy of holies wherein he dwells. He has even promised to come and make his abode with him that doeth his will (John 14: 23). St. Augustine blames himself for the time he had lost in not having sought God, from the first, in this manner of prayer.

3. When we are thus fully entered into ourselves, and warmly penetrated throughout with a lively sense of the divine presence; when the senses are all recollected and withdrawn from the circumference to the center, and the soul is sweetly and silently employed on the truths we have read, not in reasoning

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but in feeling thereon, and animating the will by affection rather than fatiguing the understanding by study; when, I say, the affections are in this state (which, however difficult it may appear at first, is, as I shall hereafter show, easily attainable), we must allow them sweetly to repose, and, as it were, swallow what they have tasted.

For as a person may enjoy the flavor of the finest viands in mastication, yet receive no nourishment from them, if he does not cease the action and swallow the food; so when our affections are enkindled, if we endeavor to stir them up yet more, we extinguish the flame, and the soul is deprived of its nourishment. We should, therefore, in a repose of love, full of respect and confidence, swallow the blessed food we have received. This method is highly necessary, and will advance the soul more in a short time, than any other in years.

4. But as I have said that our direct and principal exercise should consist in the contemplation of the divine presence, we should be exceedingly diligent in recalling our dissipated senses, as the most easy method of overcoming distractions; for a direct contest only serves to irritate and augment them; whereas, by sinking within, under a view by faith of a present God, and simply recollect-

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ing ourselves, we wage insensibly a very successful tho indirect war with them.

It is proper here to caution beginners against wandering from truth to truth, and from subject to subject; the right way to penetrate every divine truth, to enjoy its full relish, and to imprint it on the heart is to dwell upon it whilst its savor continues.

The recollection is difficult in the beginning, from the habit the soul has acquired of being always abroad, yet, when by the violence it has done itself it becomes a little accustomed to it, the process is soon rendered perfectly easy; and this partly from the force of habit, and partly because God, whose one will toward his creatures is to communicate himself to them, imparts abundant grace, and an experimental enjoyment of his presence, which very much facilitate it.

[Chapter III treats: 1. Method of meditative prayer for those who can not read; 2 and 3, Applied to the Lord's Prayer and to some of the attributes of God; 4, Transition from the first to the second degree of prayer.]

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IV

1. **Second Degree of Prayer, Called Here
"The Prayer of Simplicity." At What
Time We Reach It**
2. **How to Offer and Continue It**
3. **Requisites to Offering It Acceptably.**

1. Some call the second degree of prayer contemplation, the prayer of faith and stillness, and others call it the prayer of simplicity. I shall here use this latter appellation, as being more just than that of contemplation, which implies a more advanced state than that I am now treating of.

When the soul has been for some time exercised in the way I have mentioned, it gradually finds that it is enabled to approach God with facility; that recollection is attended with much less difficulty, and that prayer becomes easy, sweet, and delightful: it recognizes that this is the true way of finding God, and feels that "his name is as ointment poured forth" (Cant. 1:3). The method must now be altered, and that which I describe must be pursued with courage and fidelity, without being disturbed at the difficulties we may encounter in the way.

2. First, as soon as the soul by faith places itself in the presence of God, and becomes

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recollected before him, let it remain thus for a little time in respectful silence.

But if, at the beginning, in forming the act of faith, it feels some little pleasing sense of the divine presence, let it remain there without being troubled for a subject, and proceed no farther, but carefully cherish this sensation while it continues. When it abates, it may excite the will by some tender affection; and if, by the first moving thereof, it finds itself reinstated in sweet peace, let it there remain; the fire must be gently fanned, but as soon as it is kindled, we must cease our efforts, lest we extinguish it by our activity.

3. I would warmly recommend to all, never to finish prayer without remaining some little time afterward in a respectful silence. It is also of the greatest importance for the soul to go to prayer with courage, and to bring with it such a pure and disinterested love as seeks nothing from God but to please him and to do his will; for a servant who only proportions his diligence to his hope of reward is unworthy of any recompense. Go then to prayer, not desiring to enjoy spiritual delights, but to be just as it pleases God; this will preserve your spirit tranquil in aridities as well as in consolation, and prevent your being surprized at the apparent repulses or absence of God.

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V

On Various Matters Occurring In or Belonging to the Degree of Prayer, That Is to Say:

1. **On Aridities; Which Are Caused By Deprivation of the Sensible Presence of God for an Admirable End and Which Are to Be Met By Acts of Solid and Peaceful Virtue of Mind and Soul**
2. **Advantages of This Course**

1. Tho God has no other desire than to impart himself to the loving soul that seeks him, yet he frequently conceals himself from it, that it may be roused from sloth, and impelled to seek him with fidelity and love. But with what abundant goodness does he recompense the faithfulness of his beloved! And how often are these apparent withdrawals of himself succeeded by the caresses of love!

At these seasons we are apt to believe that it proves our fidelity and evinces a greater ardor of affection to seek him by an exertion of our own strength and activity; or that such a course will induce him the more speedily to revisit us. No, dear souls, believe me, this is not the best way in this degree of prayer; with patient love, with self-abasement and hu-

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miliation, with the reiterated breathings of an ardent but peaceful affection, and with silence full of veneration, you must await the return of the beloved.

2. Thus only can you demonstrate that it is himself alone, and his good pleasure, that you seek; and not the selfish delights of your own sensations in loving him. Hence it is said (Ecclus. 2:2, 3): "Be not impatient in the time of dryness and obscurity; suffer the suspensions and delays of the consolations of God; cleave unto him, and wait upon him patiently, that thy life may increase and be renewed."

Be patient in prayer, tho during your whole lifetime you should do nothing else than wait the return of the Beloved in a spirit of humiliation, abandonment, contentment, and resignation. Most excellent prayer! and it may be intermingled with the sighings of plaintive love! This conduct indeed is most pleasing to the heart of God, and will above all others, compel his return.

VI

- 1, 2. **On the Abandonment of Self to God,
Its Fruit, and Its Irrevocableness**
3. **Its Nature; God Requires It**
4. **Its Practise**

1. Here we must begin to abandon and give up our whole existence to God, from the strong and positive conviction that the occurrences of every moment result from his immediate will and permission, and are just as our state requires. This conviction will make us content with everything; and cause us to regard all that happens, not from the side of the creature, but from that of God.

But, dearly beloved, whoever you are who sincerely wish to give yourselves up to God, I conjure you that, after having once made the donation, you take not yourselves back again; remember, a gift once presented is no longer at the disposal of the giver.

2. Abandonment is a matter of the greatest importance in our progress; it is the key to the inner court, so that he who knows truly how to abandon himself will soon become perfect. We must therefore continue steadfast and immovable therein, without listening to the voice of natural reason. Great faith produces

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great abandonment; we must confide in God, "hoping against hope" (Rom. 4:18).

3. Abandonment is the casting off all selfish care, that we may be altogether at the divine disposal. All Christians are exhorted to abandonment; for it is said to all: "Take no thought for the morrow; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matt. 6:32-34); "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6); "Commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established" (Prov. 16:3); "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him and he will bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5).

Our abandonment, then, should be, both in respect to external and internal things, an absolute giving up of all our concerns into the hands of God, forgetting ourselves and thinking only of him; by which the heart will remain always disengaged, free, and at peace.

4. It is practised by continually losing our own will in the will of God; renouncing every private inclination as soon as it arises, however good it may appear, that we may stand in indifference with respect to ourselves, and only will what God has willed from all eternity; resigning ourselves in all things, whether for soul or body, for time or eternity; forgetting the past, leaving the future to Providence,

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and devoting the present to God ; satisfied with the present moment, which brings with it God's eternal order in reference to us, and is as infallible a declaration of his will as it is inevitable and common to all ; attributing nothing that befalls us to the creature, but regarding all things in God, and looking upon all, excepting only our sins, as infallibly proceeding from him.

Surrender yourselves then to be led and disposed of just as God pleases, with respect both to your outward and inward state.

VII

1. **On Suffering: That It Should Be Accepted From the Hand of God**
2. **Its Use and Profit**
3. **Its Practise**

1. Be patient under all the sufferings God sends ; if your love to him be pure, you will not seek him less on Calvary than on Tabor ; and surely he should be as much loved on that as on this, since it was on Calvary that he made the greatest display of love.

Be not like those who give themselves to him at one season, only to withdraw from him at another. They give themselves only to be carest, and wrest themselves back again when

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they are crucified; or at least turn for consolation to the creature.

2. No, beloved souls, you will not find consolation in aught but in the love of the cross, and in total abandonment; who savoreth not the cross, savoreth not the things that be of God (see Matt. 16:23). It is impossible to love God without loving the cross; and a heart that savors the cross, finds the bitterest things to be sweet: "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet" (Prov. 27:7), because it finds itself hungering for God in proportion as it is hungering for the cross. God gives us the cross, and the cross gives us God.

We may be assured that there is an eternal advancement when there is progress in the way of the cross; abandonment and the cross go hand in hand together.

3. As soon as anything is presented in the form of suffering, and you feel a repugnance, resign yourself immediately to God with respect to it, and give yourself up to him in sacrifice: you will then find that when the cross arrives, it will not be so very burthensome, because you have yourself desired it. This, however, does not prevent you from feeling its weight, as some have imagined; for when we do not feel the cross we do not suffer. A sensibility to suffering is one of the principal parts of suffering itself. Jesus Christ

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himself chose to endure its utmost rigors. We often bear the cross in weakness, at other times in strength; all should be alike to us in the will of God.

[Chapter VIII treats : 1. On mysteries ; God gives them in this state in reality ; 2 and 3. We must let him bestow or withhold as seems good to him, with a loving regard to his will.]

IX

- 1, 2. **On Virtue: All Virtues Come With God and Are Solidly and Deeply Implanted In the Soul In This Degree of the Prayer of the Heart**
3. **This Takes Place Without Difficulty**

1. It is thus that we acquire virtue with facility and certainty; for as God is the principle of all virtue, we inherit all in the possession of himself; and in proportion as we approach toward his possession, in like proportion do we receive the most eminent virtues. For all virtue is but a mask, an outside appearance mutable as our garments, if it be not bestowed from within; then, indeed, it is genuine, essential, and permanent: "The King's daughter is all glorious within," says David (Ps. 45:13). These souls, above all others, practise virtue in the most eminent degree, tho they advert not to any particular

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virtue. God, to whom they are united, leads them to the most extensive practise of it; he is exceedingly jealous over them, and permits them not the least pleasure.

2. What hungering for sufferings have those souls who thus glow with divine love! How would they precipitate themselves into excessive austerities, were they permitted to pursue their own inclinations! They think of naught save how they may please their Beloved; and they begin to neglect and forget themselves; and as their love to God increases, so do self-detestation and disregard of the creature.

3. O were this simple method once acquired, a way so suited to all, to the dull and ignorant as well as to the most learned, how easily would the whole church of God be reformed! Love only is required: "Love," says St. Augustine, "and then do what you please." For when we truly love, we can not have so much as a will to do anything that might offend the object of our affections.

[Chapter X treats of the withdrawal of the mind from external objects, thus enabling it to approach nearer to God.]

XI

1. On the Perfect Conversion Which Is the Result of This Kind of Prayer; How It Is Accomplished
- 2, 3. Two of Its Aids; the Drawing of God, and the Tendency of the Soul to Its Center
4. Its Practise

1. "Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have so deeply revolted" (Isa. 31:6). Conversion is nothing more than turning from the creature in order to return to God. It is not perfect (however good and essential to salvation) when it consists simply in turning from sin to grace. To be complete, it should take place from without inwardly.

When the soul is once turned toward God, it finds a wonderful facility in continuing steadfast in conversion; and the longer it remains thus converted, the nearer it approaches and the more firmly it adheres to God; and, the nearer it draws to him, it is of necessity the farther removed from the creature, which is so contrary to him; so that it is so effectually established in conversion that the state becomes habitual and as it were natural.

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Now, we must not suppose that this is effected by a violent exertion of its own powers; for it is not capable of, nor should it attempt, any other cooperation with divine grace than that of endeavoring to withdraw itself from external objects and turn inward; after which it has nothing farther to do than to continue firm in its adherence to God.

2. God has an attractive virtue which draws the soul more and more powerfully to himself, and in attracting he purifies; just as it is with a gross vapor exhaled by the sun, which, as it gradually ascends, is rarified and rendered pure; the vapor, indeed, contributes to its ascent only by its passivity; but the soul cooperates freely and voluntarily.

This kind of introversion is very easy and advances the soul naturally, and without effort, because God is our center. The center always exerts a very powerful attractive virtue; and the more spiritual and exalted it is, the more violent and irresistible are its attractions.

3. But besides the attracting virtue of the center, there is in every creature a strong tendency to reunion with its center, which is vigorous and active in proportion to the spirituality and perfection of the subject.

As soon as anything is turned toward its center, it is precipitated toward it with ex-

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treme rapidity, unless it be withheld by some invincible obstacle. A stone held in the hand is no sooner disengaged than by its own weight it falls to the earth as to its center; so also water and fire, when unobstructed, flow incessantly toward their center. Now, when the soul by its efforts to recollect itself is brought into the influence of the central tendency, it falls gradually, without any other force than the weight of love, into its proper center; and the more passive and tranquil it remains, and the freer from self-motion, the more rapidly it advances, because the energy of the central attractive virtue is unobstructed, and has full liberty for action.

4. All our care should therefore be directed toward acquiring the greatest degree of inward recollection; nor should we be discouraged by the difficulties we encounter in this exercise, which will soon be recompensed on the part of God by such abundant supplies of grace as will render it perfectly easy, provided we are faithful in meekly withdrawing our hearts from outward distractions and occupations, and returning to our center, with affections full of tenderness and serenity. When at any time the passions are turbulent, a gentle retreat inward to a present God, easily deadens them; any other way of opposing rather irritates than appeases them.

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XII

1. The Prayer of the Simple Presence of God
- 2, 3, 4. How Selfish Activity Merges Here In an Activity Lively, Full, Abundant, Divine, Easy, and As It Were Natural
5. Transition to Infused Prayer, In Which the Fundamental, Vital Activity of the Soul Is Not Lost, But Is More Abundantly and Powerfully Influenced By That of God
6. The Facility of These Methods of Coming to God and an Exhortation to Self-Abandonment

1. The soul that is faithful in the exercise of love and adherence to God, as above described, is astonished to feel him gradually taking possession of its whole being; it now enjoys a continual sense of that presence which is become as it were natural to it; and this, as well as prayer, becomes a matter of habit. It feels an unusual serenity gradually diffusing

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itself over all its faculties. Silence now constitutes its whole prayer; whilst God communicates an infused love, which is the beginning of ineffable blessedness.

O that I were permitted to pursue this subject, and describe some degrees of the endless progression of subsequent states? But I now write only for beginners; and shall therefore proceed no farther, but wait our Lord's time for developing what may be applicable to every state.

2. We must, however, urge it, as a matter of the highest import, to cease from self-action and self-exertion, that God himself may act alone: he says by the mouth of his prophet David, "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). But the creature is so infatuated with love and attachment to its own working that it does not believe that it works at all unless it can feel, know, and distinguish all its operations. It is ignorant that its inability minutely to observe the manner of its motion is occasioned by the swiftness of its progress; and that the operations of God, abounding more and more, absorb those of the creature; just as we see that the stars shine brightly before the sun rises, but gradually vanish as his light advances and become invisible, not from want of light in themselves, but from the excess of it in him.

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The case is similar here ; for there is a strong and universal light which absorbs all the little distinct lights of the soul ; they grow faint and disappear under its powerful influence, and self-activity is now no longer distinguishable.

3. Those greatly err who accuse this prayer of inactivity, a charge that can only arise from inexperience. O ! if they would but make some efforts toward the attainment of it, they would soon become full of light and knowledge in relation to it. This appearance of inaction is, indeed, not the consequence of sterility, but of abundance, as will be clearly perceived by the experienced soul, who will recognize that the silence is full and dunctuous by reason of plenty.

4. There are two kinds of people that keep silence ; the one because they have nothing to say, the other because they have too much : the latter is the case in this state ; silence is occasioned by excess and not by defect.

To be drowned, and to die of thirst, are deaths widely different ; yet water may be said to be the cause of both ; abundance destroys in one case, and want in the other. So here the fulness of grace stills the activity of self ; and therefore it is of the utmost importance to remain as silent as possible.

The infant hanging at its mother's breast,

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is a lively illustration of our subject; it begins to draw the milk by moving its little lips; but when its nourishment flows abundantly, it is content to swallow without effort; by any other course it would only hurt itself, spill the milk, and be obliged to quit the breast.

We must act in like manner in the beginning of prayer, by moving the lips of the affections; but as soon as the milk of divine grace flows freely, we have nothing to do but, in stillness, sweetly to imbibe it, and when it ceases to flow, again stir up the affections as the infant moves its lips. Whoever acts otherwise can not make the best use of this grace, which is bestowed to allure the soul into the repose of love, and not to force it into the multiplicity of self.

5. But what becomes of the babe that thus gently and without exertion, drinks in the milk? Who would believe that it could thus receive nourishment? Yet the more peacefully it feeds, the better it thrives. What, I say, becomes of this infant? It drops asleep on its mother's bosom. So the soul that is tranquil and peaceful in prayer sinks frequently into a mystic slumber, wherein all its powers are at rest, till it is wholly fitted for that state of which it enjoys these transient anticipations. You see that in this process the

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soul is led naturally, without trouble, effort, art or study.

The interior is not a stronghold, to be taken by storm and violence; but a kingdom of peace, which is to be gained only by love. If any will thus pursue the little path I have pointed out, it will lead them to infused prayer. God demands nothing extraordinary nor too difficult; on the contrary, he is greatly pleased by a simple and childlike conduct.

6. The most sublime attainments in religion, are those which are easiest reached; the most necessary ordinances are the least difficult. It is thus also in natural things; if you would reach the sea, embark on a river, and you will be conveyed to it insensibly and without exertion. Would you go to God, follow this sweet and simple path, and you will arrive at the desired object, with an ease and expedition that will amaze you.

O that you would but once make the trial! how soon would you find that all I have said is too little, and that your own experience will carry you infinitely beyond it! What is it you fear? why do you not instantly cast yourself into the arms of Love, who only extended them on the cross that he might embrace you? What risk do you run in depending solely on God, and abandoning yourself wholly to him? Ah! he will not deceive you, unless by bestowing

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an abundance beyond your highest hopes; but those who expect all from themselves, may hear this rebuke of God by his prophet Isaiah, "Ye have wearied yourselves in the multiplicity of your ways, and have not said, let us rest in peace" (Isa. 57:10, Vulgate).

XIII

1. **On the Rest Before God Present In the Soul In a Wonderful Way**
2. **Fruits of This Peaceful Presence**
3. **Practical Advice**

1. The soul advanced thus far has no need of any other preparation than its quietude: for now the presence of God during the day, which is the great effect, or rather continuation of prayer, begins to be infused, and almost without intermission. The soul certainly enjoys transcendent blessedness, and finds that God is more intimately present to it than it is to itself.

The only way to find him is by introversion. No sooner do the bodily eyes close than the soul is wrapt in prayer: it is amazed at so

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great a blessing, and enjoys an internal converse which external matters can not interrupt.

2. The same may be said of this species of prayer that is said of wisdom: "All good things come together with her" (Wisd. of Sol. 7:11). For virtues flow from this soul into exercise with so much sweetness and facility, that they appear natural to it, and the living spring within breaks forth abundantly into a facility for all goodness and an insensibility to all evil.

3. Let it then remain faithful in this state; and beware of choosing or seeking any other disposition whatever than this simple rest, as a preparative either to confession or communion, to action or prayer; for its sole business it to suffer itself to be filled with this divine effusion. I would not be understood to speak of the preparations necessary for ordinances, but of the most perfect interior disposition in which they can be received.

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XIV

- 1, 2. **On Interior Silence; Its Reason; God Recommends It**
3. **Exterior Silence, Retirement and Recollection Contribute to It**

1. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2: 20). The reason why inward silence is so indispensable, is, because the Word is essential and eternal, and necessarily requires dispositions in the soul in some degree correspondent to his nature, as a capacity for the reception of himself. Hearing is a sense formed to receive sounds, and is rather passive than active, admitting but not communicating sensation; and if we would hear, we must lend the ear for that purpose. Christ, the eternal Word, who must be communicated to the soul to give it new life, requires the most intense attention to his voice when he would speak within us.

2. Hence it is so frequently enjoined upon us in sacred writ, to listen and be attentive to the voice of God; I quote a few of the numerous exhortations to this affect: "Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation!" (Isa. 51:4); and again, "Hear me, all ye whom I carry in my bosom,

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and bear within my bowels" (Isa. 46:3); and further by the psalmist, "Hearken, O daughter! and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty" (Ps. 45:10, 11).

We must forget ourselves and all self-interest, and listen and be attentive to God; these two simple actions, or rather passive dispositions, produce the love of that beauty which he himself communicates.

3. Outward silence is very requisite for the cultivation and improvement of inward; and, indeed, it is impossible we should become truly interior, without loving silence and retirement. God saith by the mouth of his prophet, "I will lead her into solitude, and there will I speak to her heart" (Hos. 2:14, Vulgate); and unquestionably the being internally engaged with God is wholly incompatible with being externally busied about a thousand trifles.

When, through weakness, we become as it were uncentered, we must immediately turn again inward; and this process we must repeat as often as our distractions recur. It is a small matter to be devout and recollected for an hour or half hour, if the unction and spirit of prayer do not continue with us during the whole day.

- 1, 2. On the Examination of Conscience; How It Is Performed In This State, and That By God Himself
- 3, 4. On the Confession, Contrition, and Forgetfulness or Remembrance of Faults In This State
5. This Is Not Applicable to the Previous Degrees of Communion

1. Self-examination should always precede confession, but the manner of it should be conformable to the state of the soul. The business of those that are advanced to the degree of which we now treat is to lay their whole souls open before God, who will not fail to enlighten them, and enable them to see the peculiar nature of their faults. This examination, however, should be peaceful and tranquil; and we should depend on God for the discovery and knowledge of our sins, rather than on the diligence of our own scrutiny.

When we examine with effort, we are easily deceived, and betrayed by self-love into error: "We call the evil good, and the good evil" (Isa. 5:20); but when we lie in full exposure before the Sun of Righteousness, his divine

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beams render the smallest atoms visible. We must, then, forsake self, and abandon our souls to God, as well in examination as confession.

2. When souls have attained to this species of prayer, no fault escapes the reprehension of God; no sooner are they committed than they are rebuked by an inward burning and tender confusion. Such is the scrutiny of him who suffers no evil to be concealed; and the only way is to turn simply to God, and bear the pain and correction he inflicts.

As he becomes the incessant examiner of the soul, it can now no longer examine itself; and if it be faithful in its abandonment, experience will prove that it is much more effectually explored by his divine light than by all its own carefulness.

3. Those who tread these paths should be informed of a matter respecting their confession, in which they are apt to err. When they begin to give an account of their sins, instead of the regret and contrition they had been accustomed to feel, they find that love and tranquility sweetly pervade and take possession of their souls; now those who are not properly instructed are desirous of resisting this sensation, and forming an act of contrition, because they have heard, and with truth, that this is requisite. But they are

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not aware that they thereby lose the genuine contrition, which is this infused love, and which infinitely surpasses any effect produced by self-exertion, comprehending the other acts in itself as in one principal act in much higher perfection than if they were distinctly perceived.

Let them not be troubled to do otherwise, when God acts so excellently in and for them. To hate sin in this manner is to hate it as God does. The purest love is that which is of his immediate operation in the soul; why should we then be so eager for action? Let us remain in the state he assigns us, agreeably to the instructions of the wise man: "Put your confidence in God; remain in quiet where he hath placed you" (Ecclus. 11:21).

4. The soul will also be amazed at finding a difficulty in calling its faults to remembrance. This, however, should cause no uneasiness, first, because this forgetfulness of our faults is some proof of our purification from them, and, in this degree of advancement, it is best to forget whatever concerns ourselves that we may remember only God. Secondly, because, when confession is our duty, God will not fail to make known to us our greatest faults; for then he himself examines; and the soul will feel the end of examination more perfectly accomplished than

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it could possibly have been by all our own endeavors.

5. These instructions, however, would be altogether unsuitable to the preceding degrees, while the soul continues in its active state, wherein it is right and necessary that it should in all things exert itself in proportion to its advancement. As to those who have arrived at this more advanced state, I exhort them to follow these instructions, and not to vary their simple occupations even on approaching the communion; let them remain in silence, and suffer God to act freely. He can not be better received than by himself.

[Chapters XVI-XIX treat of reading and vocal prayers, of petitions which are inspired of the Spirit, of faults and discouragements to which they give rise, and of distractions and temptations.]

XX

- 1, 2. **Prayer Divinely Explained As a Devotional Sacrifice, Under the Similitude of Incense**
3. **Our Annihilation In This Sacrifice**
- 4, 5. **Solidity and Fruit of This Prayer According to the Gospel**

1. Both devotion and sacrifice are comprehended in Prayer, which, according to St. John, is an incense the smoke whereof ascend-

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eth unto God; therefore it is said in the Apocalypse, that "unto the angel was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints" (Rev. 8:3).

Prayer is the effusion of the heart in the presence of God: "I have poured out my soul before the Lord," said the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:15). The prayer of the wise men at the feet of Christ in the stable of Bethlehem was signified by the incense they offered.

2. Prayer is a certain warmth of love, melting, dissolving, and sublimating the soul, and causing it to ascend unto God, and, as the soul is melted, odors rise from it; and these sweet exhalations proceed from the consuming fire of love within.

This is illustrated in the Canticles (1:12), where the spouse says, "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." The table is the center of the soul; and when God is there, and we know how to dwell near, and abide with him, the sacred presence gradually dissolves the hardness of the soul, and, as it melts, fragrance issues forth; hence it is, that the Beloved says of his spouse, in seeing her soul melt when he spoke, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" (Cant. 5:6; 3:6).

3. Thus does the soul ascend to God, by

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giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of divine love. This is a state of sacrifice essential to the Christian religion, in which the soul suffers itself to be destroyed and annihilated, that it may pay homage to the sovereignty of God; as it is written, "The power of the Lord is great, and he is honored only by the humble" (Ecclus. 3:20). By the destruction of self, we acknowledge the supreme existence of God. We must cease to exist in self, in order that the Spirit of the Eternal Word may exist in us; it is by the giving up of our own life that we give place to his coming; and in dying to ourselves, he himself lives in us.

We must surrender our whole being to Christ Jesus, and cease to live any longer in ourselves, that he may become our life; "that being dead, our life may be hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). "Pass ye into me," saith God, "all ye who earnestly seek after me" (Ecclus. 24:16). But how is it we pass into God? In no way but by leaving and forsaking ourselves, that we may be lost in him; and this can be effected only by annihilation, which, being the true prayer of adoration, renders unto God alone, all blessing, honor, glory, and power, forever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

4. This is the prayer of truth; it is "wor-

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shipping God in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). "In spirit," because we enter into the purity of that Spirit which prayeth within us, and are drawn forth from our own carnal and human method; "in truth," because we are thereby placed in the truth of the all of God and the nothing of the creature.

There are but these two truths, the all and the nothing; everything else is falsehood. We can pay due honor to the all of God only in our own annihilation; which is no sooner accomplished than he, who never suffers a void in nature, instantly fills us with himself.

Ah! did we but know the virtues and the blessings which the soul derives from this prayer, we should not be willing to do anything else. It is the pearl of great price; the hidden treasure (Matt. 13: 44, 45), which whoever findeth selleth freely all that he hath to purchase it; it is the well of living water, which springeth up unto everlasting life. It is the adoration of God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4: 14-23): and it is the full performance of the purest evangelical precepts.

5. Jesus Christ assures us, that the "kingdom of God is within us" (Luke 17: 21), and this is true in two senses: first, when God becomes so fully Master and Lord in us that nothing resists his dominion, then our interior is his kingdom; and again, when we possess

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God, who is the Supreme Good, we possess his kingdom also, wherein there is fulness of joy, and where we attain the end of our creation. Thus it is said, "to serve God is to reign." The end of our creation, indeed, is to enjoy God, even in this life: but alas! who thinks of it?

[Chapter XXI treats of the objections of slothfulness and inactivity made to this form of prayer.]

XXII

- 1-6. Distinction Between Inward and Outward Acts; In This State the Acts of the Soul Are Inward, But Habitual, Continued, Direct, Lasting, Deep, Simple, Unconscious, and Resembling a Gentle and Perpetual Sinking Into the Ocean of Divinity
- 7, 8. A Comparison
9. How to Act When We Perceive No Attraction

1. Acts are distinguished into external and internal. External acts are those which appear outwardly, and bear relation to some sensible object, and have no moral character except such as they derive from the principle from which they proceed. I intend here to speak only of internal acts, those energies of

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the soul by which it turns internally toward some objects and away from others.

2. If during my application to God, I should form a will to change the nature of my act, I should thereby withdraw myself from God and turn to created objects, and that in a greater or less degree according to the strength of the act: and if, when I am turned toward the creature, I would return to God, I must necessarily form an act for that purpose; and the more perfect this act is, the more complete is the conversion.

Till conversion is perfected, many reiterated acts are necessary; for it is with some progressive, tho with others it is instantaneous. My act, however, should consist in a continual turning to God, an exertion of every faculty and power of the soul purely for him, agreeably to the instructions of the son of Sirach: "Re-unite all the motions of thy heart in the holiness of God" (Ecclus. 30:24); and to the example of David, "I will keep my whole strength for thee" (Ps. 59:9, Vulgate), which is done by earnestly re-entering into ourselves; as Isaiah saith, "Return to your heart" (Isa 46:8, Vulgate). For we have strayed from our heart by sin, and it is our heart only that God requires: "My son give me thine heart, and let thine eye observe my ways" (Prov. 23:26). To give the heart

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to God, is to have the whole energy of the soul ever centering in him, that we may be rendered conformable to his will. We must, therefore, continue invariably turned to God, from our first application to him.

But the spirit being unstable, and the soul accustomed to turn to external objects, it is easily distracted. This evil, however, will be counteracted if, on perceiving the wandering, we by a pure act of return to God instantly replace ourselves in him; and this act subsists as long as the conversion lasts, by the powerful influence of a simple and unfeigned return to God.

3. As many reiterated acts form a habit, the soul contracts the habit of conversion; and that act which was before interrupted and distinct becomes habitual. The soul should not, then, be perplexed about forming an act which already subsists, and which, indeed, it can not attempt to form without very great difficulty; it even finds that it is withdrawn from its proper state, under pretense of seeking that which is in reality acquired, seeing the habit is already formed, and it is confirmed in habitual conversion and habitual love. It is seeking one act by the help of many, instead of continuing attached to God by one simple act alone.

We may remark, that at times we form with

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facility many distinct yet simple acts; which shows that we have wandered, and that we re-enter our heart after having strayed from it; yet when we have re-entered, we should remain there in peace. We err, therefore, in supposing that we must not form acts; we form them continually; but let them be conformable to the degree of our spiritual advancement.

4. The great difficulty with most spiritual people arises from their not clearly comprehending this matter. Now, some acts are transient and distinct, others are continued, and again, some are direct and others reflective. All can not form the first, neither are all in a state suited to form the others. The first are adapted to those who have strayed, and who require a distinct exertion, proportioned to the extent of their deviation; if the latter be inconsiderable, an act of the most simple kind is sufficient.

5. By the continued act, I mean that whereby the soul is altogether turned toward God by a direct act, always subsisting, and which it does not renew unless it has been interrupted. The soul being thus turned, is in charity, and abides therein: "And he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God" (John 4: 16). The soul then, as it were, exists and rests in this habitual act. It is, however, free from

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sloth; for there is still an uninterrupted act subsisting, which is a sweet sinking into the Deity, whose attraction becomes more and more powerful. Following this potent attraction and dwelling in love and charity, the soul sinks continually deeper into that love, maintaining an activity infinitely more powerful, vigorous, and effectual than that which served to accomplish its first return.

6. Now the soul that is thus profoundly and vigorously active, being wholly given up to God, does not perceive this act, because it is direct and not reflective. This is the reason why some, not expressing themselves properly, say that they make no acts; but it is a mistake, for they were never more truly or nobly active; they should say, that they did not distinguish their acts, and not that they did not act. I grant that they do not act of themselves; but they are drawn and they follow the attraction. Love is the weight which sinks them. As one falling into the sea would sink from one depth to another to all eternity, if the sea were infinite, so they, without perceiving their descent, drop with inconceivable swiftness into the lowest deeps.

It is, then, improper to say that we do not make acts; all form acts, but the manner of their formation is not alike in all. The mistake arises from this, that all who know they

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should act are desirous of acting distinguishably and perceptibly; but this can not be: sensible acts are for beginners; there are others for those in a more advanced state. To stop in the former, which are weak and of little profit, is to debar ourselves of the latter; as to attempt the latter without having passed through the former is a no less considerable error.

7. "To everything there is a season" (Eccles. 3:1): every state has its commencement, its progress, and its consummation, and it is an unhappy error to stop in the beginning. There is no art but what has its progress; at first we labor with toil, but at last we reap the fruit of our industry.

When the vessel is in port, the mariners are obliged to exert all their strength, that they may clear her thence, and put to sea; but they subsequently turn her with facility as they please. In like manner, while the soul remains in sin and the creature, many endeavors are requisite to effect its freedom; the cables which hold it must be loosed, and then by strong and vigorous efforts it gathers itself inward, pushes off gradually from the old port of self, and, leaving that behind, proceeds to the interior, the haven so much desired.

8. When the vessel is thus started, as she advances on the sea she leaves the shore be-

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hind; and the farther she departs from the land, the less labor is requisite in moving her forward. At length she begins to get gently under sail, and now proceeds so swiftly in her course that the oars, which are become useless, are laid aside. How is the pilot now employed? he is content with spreading the sails and holding the rudder.

To spread the sails is to lay ourselves before God in the prayer of simple exposition, to be moved by his Spirit; to hold the rudder is to restrain our heart from wandering from the true course, recalling it gently, and guiding it steadily by the dictates of the Spirit of God, which gradually gains possession of the heart, just as the breeze by degrees fills the sails and impels the vessel. While the winds are fair, the pilot and the mariners rest from their labors. What progress do they not now secure, without the least fatigue! They make more way now in one hour, while they rest and leave the vessel to the wind, than they did in a length of time by all their former efforts; and even were they now to attempt using the oars, besides greatly fatiguing themselves, they would only retard the vessel by their useless exertions.

This is our proper course interiorly, and a short time will advance us by the divine impulsion farther than many reiterated acts of

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self-exertion. Whoever will try this path, will find it the easiest in the world.

9. If the wind be contrary and blow a storm, we must cast anchor in the sea, to hold the vessel. This anchor is simply trust in God and hope in his goodness, waiting patiently the calming of the tempest and the return of a favorable gale: thus did David: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry" (Ps. 40:1). We must therefore be resigned to the Spirit of God, giving ourselves up wholly to his divine guidance.

XXIII

1, 2. **The Barrenness of Preaching Vice, Error, Heresies, and All Sorts of Evils Arise From the Fact That the People Are Not Instructed In the Prayer of the Heart**

3-5. **Altho the Way Is Surer, Easier, and Fitter For the Simple-Minded**

6-8. **Exhortation to Pastors to Set Their Flocks Upon the Practise of It, Without Employing Them In Studied Forms and Methodical Devotion**

1. If all who labored for the conversion of others sought to reach them by the heart, in-

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roducing them immediately into prayer and the interior life, numberless and permanent conversions would ensue. On the contrary, few and transient fruits must attend that labor which is confined to outward matters, such as burdening the disciple with a thousand precepts for external exercises, instead of leading the soul to Christ by the occupation of the heart in him.

If ministers were solicitous thus to instruct their parishioners, shepherds, while they watched their flocks, would have the spirit of the primitive Christians, and the husbandman at the plow maintain a blessed intercourse with his God; the manufacturer, while he exhausted his outward man with labor, would be renewed with inward strength; every species of vice would shortly disappear, and every parishioner become spiritually minded.

2. O when once the heart is gained, how easily is all the rest corrected! This is why God, above all things requires the heart. By this means alone we may extirpate the dreadful vices which so prevail among the lower orders, such as drunkenness, blasphemy, lewdness, enmity, and theft. Jesus Christ would reign everywhere in peace, and the face of the Church would be renewed throughout.

The decay of internal piety is unquestionably the source of the various errors that

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have appeared in the world; all would speedily be overthrown were inward devotion reestablished. Errors take possession of no soul, except such as are deficient in faith and prayer; and if, instead of engaging our wandering brethren in constant disputations, we would but teach them simply to believe, and diligently to pray, we should lead them sweetly to God.

O how inexpressibly great is the loss sustained by mankind from the neglect of the interior life! And what an account will those have to render who are entrusted with the care of souls and have not discovered and communicated to their flock this hidden treasure!

3. Some excuse themselves by saying, that there is danger in this way, or that simple persons are incapable of comprehending the things of the Spirit. But the oracles of truth affirm the contrary: "The Lord loveth those who walk simply" (Prov. 12:22, Vulgate). But what danger can there be in walking in the only true way, which is Jesus Christ, giving ourselves up to him, fixing our eye continually on him, placing all our confidence in his grace, and tending with all the strength of our soul to his purest love?

4. The simple ones, so far from being incapable of this perfection, are, by their do-

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cility, innocence, and humility, peculiarly qualified for its attainment; and, as they are not accustomed to reasoning, they are less tenacious of their own opinions. Even from their want of learning they submit more freely to the teachings of the divine Spirit; whereas others, who are cramped and blinded by self-sufficiency, offer much greater resistance to the operations of grace.

We are told in Scripture that “unto the simple, God giveth the understanding of his law” (Ps. 118:130, Vulgate); and we are also assured, that God loves to communicate with them: “The Lord careth for the simple; I was reduced to extremity and he saved me” (Ps. 114:6, Vulgate). Let spiritual fathers be careful how they prevent their little ones from coming to Christ; he himself said to his apostles, “Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). It was the endeavor of the apostles to prevent children from going to our Lord which occasioned this command.

5. Man frequently applies a remedy to the outward body, whilst the disease lies at the heart. The cause of our being so unsuccessful in reforming mankind, especially those of the lower classes, is our beginning with external matters; all our labors in this field do but produce such fruit as endures not; but if the key

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of the interior be first given, the exterior would be naturally and easily reformed.

Now this is very easy. To teach man to seek God in his heart, to think of him, to return to him whenever he finds he has wandered from him, and to do and suffer all things with a single eye to please him, is leading the soul to the source of all grace, and causing it to find there everything necessary for sanctification.

6. I therefore beseech you all, O ye that have the care of souls, to put them at once into this way, which is Jesus Christ; nay, it is he himself that conjures you, by all the blood he has shed for those entrusted to you. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem!" (Isa. 10: 2, Vulgate). O ye dispensers of his grace! preachers of his word! ministers of his sacraments! establish his kingdom!—and that it may indeed be established, make him ruler over the heart! For as it is the heart alone that can oppose his sovereignty, it is by the subjection of the heart that his sovereignty is most highly honored: "Give glory to the holiness of God, and he shall become your sanctification" (Isa. 8: 13, Vulgate). Compose catechisms expressly to teach prayer, not by reasoning nor by method, for the simple are incapable of that; but to teach the prayer of the heart, not of the understanding; the prayer of God's Spirit, not of man's invention.

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7. Alas! by directing them to pray in elaborate forms, and to be curiously critical therein, you create their chief obstacles. The children have been led astray from the best of fathers, by your endeavoring to teach them too refined a language. Go, then, ye poor children, to your heavenly Father, speak to him in your natural language; rude and barbarous as it may be, it is not so to him. A father is better pleased with an address which love and respect have made confused, because he sees that it proceeds from the heart, than he is by a dry and barren harangue, tho never so elaborate. The simple and undisguised emotions of love are infinitely more expressive than all language, and all reasoning.

8. Men have desired to love Love by formal rules, and have thus lost much of that love. O how unnecessary is it to teach an art of loving! The language of love is barbarous to him that does not love, but perfectly natural to him that does; and there is no better way to learn how to love God, than to love him. The most ignorant often become the most perfect, because they proceed with more cordiality and simplicity. The Spirit of God needs none of our arrangements; when it pleases him, he turns shepherds into prophets, and, so far from excluding any from the temple of prayer, he throws wide the gates that all may enter;

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while wisdom is directed to cry aloud in the highways. "Whoso is simple let him turn in hither" (Prov. 9:4); and to the fools she saith, "Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. 9:5). And doth not Jesus Christ himself thank his Father for having "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes?" (Matt. 11:25.)

[Chapter XXIV treats of: "On the passive way to Divine Union.]

A Prayer of James Skinner

O Blessed Lord, I beseech thee to pour down upon me such grace as may not only cleanse this life of mine but beautify it a little, if it be thy will, before I go hence and am no more seen. Grant that I may love thee with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, and my neighbor as myself—and that I may persevere unto the end; through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

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A Prayer of Johann Friedrich Starck

Rest upon us, O Spirit of love, and chase all anger, envy, and bitter grudges from our souls. Be our comforter in trial, when the billows go over our heads; be our strength in the hour of weakness, and help us to control the desires of the flesh. Let us grow in faith and love, in hope, patience, and humility. See by how many temptations we are surrounded, and preserve us from giving way to them; show us the path wherein we should tread, for if we trust to our own impulses we shall go astray; but if thou lead us we shall run in the way of thy commandments. Our hearts lie open before thee; enter now with thy rich gifts, strengthen, establish, settle them. Dwell in them and make them thy temple, so shall we have the pledge of our sonship, and of our salvation. AMEN.

SELECTIONS FROM
A Serious Call to a Devout and
Holy Life
AND
The Spirit of Love
BY
WILLIAM LAW

WILLIAM LAW

Two extremes meet in this remarkable character, an able controversialist and a strong devotional writer. He was born at King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire, 1686; died there April 9, 1761. He entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 1705, graduated (B. A.), 1708, M. A., 1712, and in the year 1711 was ordained and elected Fellow of his college. Owing to his political principles he declined to take the oath of allegiance to George I. About 1727 he entered the family of Edward Gibbon at Putney, as tutor to the son Edward, afterward father of the historian, spending ten years as "the much honored friend and spiritual director of the whole family." This same year he founded a school for fourteen girls at King's Cliffe, and in 1745 a school for eighteen boys. This man, of decidedly mystical tendencies, "in order to begin the day by an act of charity, distributed the milk of four cows to his poor neighbors." He is best known by his "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life" (London, 1729 and often; new ed. 1906). In "The Spirit of Prayer" (1754; new ed. 1893), Law unfolds his mystical views. His other well-known writings are: "Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor" (1717-19; new ed. 1893), the most forceful piece of writing produced by the Bangorian Controversy; and "A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection" (1726; new ed., 1902). All of these may be found in his Works (9 vols., 1762; a beautiful reprint, ed. G. B. Morgan, 9 vols., Brockenhurst, 1892-93).

I

Concerning the Nature and Extent of Christian Devotion

Devotion is neither private nor public prayer; but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted, to God.

He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God; who considers God in every thing, who serves God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory.

We readily acknowledge, that God alone is to be the rule and measure of our prayers; that in them we are to look wholly unto him, and act wholly for him; that we are only to pray in such a manner, for such things and such ends, as are suitable to his glory.

Now let any one but find out the reason why he is to be thus strictly pious in his prayers, and he will find the same as strong a reason to be as strictly pious in all the other

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parts of his life. For there is not the least shadow of a reason why we should make God the rule and measure of our prayers; why we should then look wholly unto him, and pray according to his will; but what equally proves it necessary for us to look wholly unto God, and make him the rule and measure of all the other actions of our life. For any ways of life, any employment of our talents, whether of our parts, our time, or money, that is not strictly according to the will of God, that is not for such ends as are suitable to his glory, are as great absurdities and failings as prayers that are not according to the will of God. For there is no other reason, why our prayers should be according to the will of God, why they should have nothing in them but what is wise, and holy, and heavenly—there is no other reason for this, but that our lives may be of the same nature, full of the same wisdom, holiness, and heavenly tempers, that we may live unto God, in the same spirit that we pray unto him. Were it not our strict duty to live by reason, to devote all the actions of our lives to God, were it not absolutely necessary to walk before him in wisdom and holiness and all heavenly conversation, doing every thing in his name, and for his glory, there would be no excellency or wisdom in the most heavenly prayers. Nay,

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such prayers would be absurdities, they would be like prayers for wings, when it was no part of our duty to fly.

As sure, therefore, as there is any wisdom in praying for the Spirit of God, so sure is it, that we are to make that Spirit the rule of all our actions; as sure as it is our duty to look wholly unto God in our prayers, so sure is it that it is our duty to live wholly unto God in our lives. But we can no more be said to live unto God, unless we live unto him in all the ordinary actions of our life, unless he be the rule and measure of all our ways, than we can be said to pray unto God, unless our prayers look wholly unto him. So that unreasonable and absurd ways of life, whether in labor or diversion, whether they consume our time or our money, are alike unreasonable and absurd prayers, and are as truly an offense unto God.

It is for want of knowing, or at least considering this, that we see such a mixture of ridicule in the lives of many people. You see them strict as to some times and places of devotion, but when the service of the church is over, they are but like those that seldom or never come there. In their way of life, their manner of spending their time and money, in their cares and fears, in their pleasures and indulgences, in their labor and diversions,

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they are like the rest of the world. This makes the loose part of the world generally make a jest of those that are devout, because they see their devotion goes no further than their prayers, and that when they are over, they live no more unto God till the time of prayer returns again; but live by the same humor and fancy, and in as full an enjoyment of all the follies of life, as other people. This is the reason why they are the jest and scorn of careless and worldly people; not because they are really devoted to God, but because they appear to have no other devotion but that of occasional prayers.

Julius is very fearful of missing prayers; all the parish supposes Julius to be sick, if he is not at church. But if you were to ask him why he spends the rest of his time by humor and chance? why he is a companion of the silliest people in their most silly pleasures? why he is ready for every impertinent entertainment and diversion? If you were to ask him why there is no amusement too trifling to please him? why he is busy at all balls and assemblies? why he gives himself up to an idle gossiping conversation? why he lives in foolish friendships and fondness for particular persons, that neither want nor deserve any particular kindness? why he allows himself in foolish hatreds and resentments against

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particular persons, without considering that he is to love everybody as himself? If you ask him why he never puts his conversation, his time, and fortune, under the rules of religion, Julius has no more to say for himself than the most disorderly person. For the whole tenor of Scripture lies as directly against such a life, as against debauchery and intemperance: he that lives in such a course of idleness and folly, lives no more according to the religion of Jesus Christ than he that lives in gluttony and intemperance.

If a man was to tell Julius that there was no occasion for so much constancy at prayers—and that he might, without any harm to himself, neglect the service of the Church, as the generality of people do, Julius would think such a one to be no Christian, and that he ought to avoid his company. But if a person only tells him, that he may live as the generality of the world does, that he may enjoy himself as others do, that he may spend his time and money as people of fashion do, that he may conform to the follies and frailties of the generality, and gratify his tempers and passions as most people do, Julius never suspects that man to want a Christian spirit, or that he is doing the devil's work.

And if Julius was to read all the New Testament from the beginning to the end, he

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would find his course of life condemned in every page of it.

And indeed there can not anything be imagined more absurd in itself, than wise, and sublime, and heavenly prayers added to a life of vanity and folly, where neither labor nor diversions, neither time nor money, are under the direction of the wisdom and heavenly temper of our prayers. If we were to see a man pretending to act wholly with regard to God in every thing that he did, that would neither spend time nor money, or take any labor or diversion, but so far as he could act according to strict principles of reason and piety, and yet at the same time neglect all prayer, whether public or private; should we not be amazed at such a man, and wonder how he could have so much folly along with so much religion?

Yet this is as reasonable as for any person to pretend to strictness in devotion, to be careful of observing times and places of prayer, and yet letting the rest of his life, his time and labor, his talents and money, be disposed of without any regard to strict rules of piety and devotion. For it is as great an absurdity to suppose holy prayers and divine petitions, without a holiness of life suitable to them, as to suppose a holy and divine life without prayers.

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Let any one therefore think how easily he could confute a man that pretended to great strictness of life without prayer, and the same arguments will as plainly confute another that pretends to strictness of prayer, without carrying the same strictness into every other part of life. For to be weak and foolish in spending our time and fortune, is no greater a mistake than to be weak and foolish in relation of our prayers. And to allow ourselves in any ways of life that neither are, nor can be, offered to God, is the same irreligion as to neglect our prayers, or use them in such a manner as makes them an offering unworthy of God.

The short of the matter is this; either reason and religion prescribes rules and ends to all the ordinary actions of our life, or they do not: if they do, then it is as necessary to govern all our actions by those rules as it is necessary to worship God. For if religion teaches us anything concerning eating and drinking, or spending our time and money; if it teaches us how we are to use and condemn the world; if it tells us what tempers we are to have in common life, how we are to be disposed toward all people; how we are to behave toward the sick, the poor, the old and destitute; if it tells us whom we are to treat with a particular love, whom we are to

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regard with a particular esteem; if it tells us how we are to treat our enemies, and how we are to mortify and deny ourselves, he must be very weak that can think these parts of religion are not to be observed with as much exactness as any doctrines that relate to prayers.

It is very observable, that there is not one command in all the gospel for public worship; and perhaps it is a duty that is least insisted upon in Scripture of any other. The frequent attendance at it is never so much as mentioned in all the New Testament. Whereas that religion or devotion which is to govern the ordinary actions of our life is to be found in almost every verse of Scripture. Our blessed Savior and his apostles are wholly taken up in doctrines that relate to common life. They call us to renounce the world, and differ in every temper and way of life, from the spirit and the way of the world, to renounce all its goods, to fear none of its evils, to reject its joys, and have no value for its happiness; to be as new born babes, that are born into a new state of things; to live as pilgrims in spiritual watching, in holy fear, and heavenly aspiring after another life; to take up our daily cross, to deny ourselves, to profess the blessedness of mourning, to seek the blessedness of poverty of spirit; to for-

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sake the pride and vanity of riches, to make no thought for the morrow, to live in the profoundest state of humility, to rejoice in worldly sufferings; to reject the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; to bear injuries, to forgive and bless our enemies, and to love mankind as God loveth them; to give up our whole hearts and affections to God, and strive to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal glory.

This is the common devotion which our blessed Savior taught, in order to make it the common life of all Christians. Is it not therefore exceeding strange that people should place so much piety in the attendance upon public worship, concerning which there is not one precept of our Lord's to be found, and yet neglect these common duties of our ordinary life, which are commanded in every page of the gospel? I call these duties the devotion of our common life, because if they are to be practised, they must be made parts of our common life, they can have no place anywhere else.

If contempt of the world and heavenly affection is a necessary temper of Christians, it is necessary that this temper appear in the whole course of their lives, in their manner of using the world, because it can have no place anywhere else.

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If self-denial be a condition of salvation, all that would be saved must make it a part of their ordinary life. If humility be a Christian duty, then the common life of a Christian is to be a constant course of humility in all its kinds. If poverty of spirit be necessary, it must be the spirit and temper of every day of our lives. If we are to relieve the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, it must be the common charity of our lives, as far as we can render ourselves able to perform it. If we are to love our enemies we must make our common life a visible exercise and demonstration of that love. If content and thankfulness, if the patient bearing of evil be duties to God, they are the duties of every day, and in every circumstance of our life. If we are to be wise and holy as the new-born sons of God, we can no otherwise be so but by renouncing every thing that is foolish and vain in every part of our common life. If we are to be in Christ new creatures, we must show that we are so, by having new ways of living in the world. If we are to follow Christ, it must be in our common way of spending every day.

Thus it is in all the virtues and holy tempers of Christianity; they are not ours unless they be the virtues and tempers of our ordinary life. So that Christianity is so far

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from leaving us to live in the common ways of life, conforming to the folly of customs, and gratifying the passions and tempers which the spirit of the world delights in, it is so far from indulging us in any of these things, that all its virtues which it makes necessary to salvation are only so many ways of living above, and contrary to, the world in all the common actions of our life. If our common life is not a common course of humility, self-denial, renunciation of the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly affection, we do not live the lives of Christians.

But yet tho it is thus plain that this and this alone is Christianity, a uniform, open, and visible practise of all these virtues, yet it is as plain that there is little or nothing of this to be found, even among the better sort of people. You see them often at church, and pleased with fine preachers; but look into their lives, and you see them just the same sort of people as others are that make no pretenses to devotion. The difference that you find betwixt them is only the difference of their natural tempers. They have the same taste of the world, the same worldly cares, and fears, and joys; they have the same turn of mind, equally vain in their desires. You see the same fondness for state and equipage, the same pride and vanity of dress, the

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same self-love and indulgence, the same foolish friendships and groundless hatreds, the same levity of mind and trifling spirit, the same fondness for diversions, the same idle dispositions and vain ways of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as the rest of the world, that make no pretenses to devotion.

I do not mean this comparison betwixt people seemingly good, and profest rakes, but betwixt people of sober lives. Let us take an instance in two modest women: let it be supposed that one of them is careful of times of devotion, and observes them through a sense of duty, and that the other has no hearty concern about it, but is at church seldom or often, just as it happens. Now it is a very easy thing to see this difference betwixt these persons. But when you have seen this, can you find any farther difference betwixt them? Can you find that their common life is of a different kind? Are not the tempers, and customs, and manners of the one of the same kind as of the other? Do they live as if they belonged to different worlds, had different views in their heads, and different rules and measures of all their actions? Have they not the same goods and evils? Are they not pleased and displeased in the same manner, and for the same things? Do they not live

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in the same course of life? Does one seem to be of this world, looking at the things that are temporal, and the other to be of another world, looking wholly at the things that are eternal? Does the one live in pleasure, delighting herself in show or dress, and the other live in self-denial and mortification, renouncing every thing that looks like vanity, either of person, dress, or carriage? Does the one follow public diversions, and trifle away her time in idle visits and corrupt conversation, and does the other study all the arts of improving her time, living in prayer and watching, and such good works as may make all her time turn to her advantage and be placed to her account at the last day? Is the one careless of expense, and glad to be able to adorn herself with every costly ornament of dress, and does the other consider her fortune as a talent given by God, which is to be improved religiously, and no more to be spent in vain and needless ornaments than it is to be buried in the earth?

Where must you look, to find one person of religion differing in this manner from another that has none? And yet if they do not differ in these things which are here related, can it with any sense be said, the one is a good Christian and the other not?

Take another instance among the men.

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Leo has a great deal of good nature, has kept what they call good company, hates every thing that is false and base, is very generous and brave to his friends, but has concerned himself so little with religion that he hardly knows the difference betwixt a Jew and a Christian.

Eusebius on the other hand, has had early impressions of religion, and buys books of devotion. He can talk of all the feasts and fasts of the Church, and knows the names of most men that have been eminent for piety. You never hear him swear, or make a loose jest, and when he talks of religion, he talks of it as a matter of the last concern.

Here you see, that one person has religion enough, according to the way of the world, to be reckoned a pious Christian and the other is so far from all appearance of religion, that he may fairly be reckoned a heathen; and yet if you look into their common life, if you examine their chief and ruling tempers in the greatest articles of life or the greatest doctrines of Christianity, you will find the least difference imaginable.

Consider them with regard to the use of the world, because that is what everybody can see.

How to have right notions and tempers with relation to this world is as essential to religion

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as to have right notions of God. And it is as possible for a man to worship a crocodile and yet be a pious man, as to have his affections set upon this world and yet be a good Christian.

But now if you consider Leo and Eusebius in this respect, you will find them exactly alike, seeking, using, and enjoying, all that can be got in this world in the same manner and for the same ends. You will find that riches, prosperity, pleasures, indulgences, state, equipage, and honor, are just as much the happiness of Eusebius as they are of Leo. And yet if Christianity has not changed a man's mind and temper with relation to these things, what can we say that it has done for him?

For if the doctrines of Christianity were practised, they would make a man as different from other people as to all worldly tempers, sensual pleasures, and the pride of life, as a wise man is different from a natural; it would be as easy a thing to know a Christian by his outward course of life as it is now difficult to find any body that lives it. For it is notorious that Christians are now not only like other men in their frailties and infirmities, this might be in some degree excusable, but the complaint is, they are like heathens in all the main and chief articles of their lives.

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They enjoy the world, and live every day in the same tempers, and the same designs, and the same indulgences, as they did who knew not God, nor of any happiness in another life. Every body that is capable of any reflection must have observed that this is generally the state even of devout people, whether men or women. You may see them different from other people, so far as to times and places of prayer, but generally like the rest of the world in all the other parts of their lives. That is, adding Christian devotion to a heathen life: I have the authority of our blessed Savior for this remark, where he says, "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek." But if to be thus affected even with the necessary things of this life shows that we are not yet of a Christian spirit, but are like the heathens, surely to enjoy the vanity and folly of the world as they did, to be like them in the main chief tempers of our lives, in self-love and indulgence, in sensual pleasures and diversions, in the vanity of dress, the love of show and greatness, or any other gaudy distinctions of fortune, is a much greater sign of a heathen temper. And consequently, they who add devotion to such a life must be said to pray as Christians but live as heathens.

II

**An Inquiry Into the Reason Why the
Generality of Christians Fall so far
Short of the Holiness and Devotion of
Christianity**

It may now be reasonably inquired, how it comes to pass that the lives even of the better sort of people are thus strangely contrary to the principles of Christianity?

But before I give a direct answer to this, I desire it may also be inquired, how it comes to pass that swearing is so common a vice among Christians? It is indeed not yet so common among women as it is among men. But among men this sin is so common that perhaps there are more than two in three that are guilty of it through the whole course of their lives, swearing more or less, just as it happens, some constantly, others only now and then as it were by chance. Now I ask, how comes it that two in three of the men are guilty of so gross and profane a sin as this is? There is neither ignorance nor human infirmity to plead for it: it is against an express commandment, and the most plain doctrine of our blessed Savior.

Do but now find the reason why the gen-

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erality of men live in this notorious vice, and then you will have found the reason why the generality even of the better sort of people, live so contrary to Christianity.

Now the reason of common swearing is this; it is because men have not so much as the intention to please God in all their actions. For let a man but have so much piety as to intend to please God in all the actions of his life, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will never swear more. It will be as impossible for him to swear, while he feels this intention within himself, as it is impossible for a man that intends to please his prince to go up and abuse him to his face.

It seems but a small and necessary part of piety to have such a sincere intention as this; and that he has no reason to look upon himself as a disciple of Christ who is not thus far advanced in piety. And yet it is purely for want of this degree of piety, that you see such a mixture of sin and folly in the lives even of the better sort of people. It is for want of this intention that you see men that profess religion yet live in swearing and sensuality; that you see clergymen given to pride and covetousness and worldly enjoyments. It is for want of this intention that you see women that profess devotion yet living in all the folly and vanity of dress, wast-

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ing their time in idleness and pleasures, and in all such instances of state and equipage as their estates will reach. For let but a woman feel her heart full of this intention, and she will find it as impossible to patch or paint as to curse or swear; she will no more desire to shine at balls and assemblies, or make a figure among those that are most finely drest, than she will desire to dance upon a rope to please spectators; she will know that the one is as far from the wisdom and excellency of the Christian spirit as the other.

It was this general intention that made the primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety, and made the goodly fellowship of the saints, and all the glorious army of martyrs and confessors. And if you will here stop and ask yourself why you are not so pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you that it is neither through ignorance, nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. You observe the same Sunday-worship that they did; and you are strict in it, because it is your full intention to be so. And when you as fully intend to be like them in their ordinary common life, when you intend to please God in all your actions, you will find it as possible as to be strictly exact in the service of the Church. And when you have this intention

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to please God in all your actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, you will find in you as great an aversion to everything that is vain and impertinent in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to any thing that is profane. You will be as fearful of living in any foolish way, either of spending your time, or your fortune, as you are now fearful of neglecting the public worship.

Now, who that wants this general sincere intention can be reckoned a Christian? And yet if it was among Christians, it would change the whole face of the world; true piety and exemplary holiness would be as common and visible as buying and selling, or any trade in life.

Let a clergyman but be thus pious, and he will converse as if he had been brought up by an apostle; he will no more think and talk of noble preferment than of noble eating or a glorious chariot. He will no more complain of the frowns of the world, or a small cure, or the want of a patron, than he will complain of the want of a laced coat, or a running horse. Let him but intend to please God in all his actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will know that there is nothing noble in a clergyman but a burning zeal for the salvation of souls; nor any

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thing poor in his profession but idleness and a worldly spirit.

Again: let a tradesman but have this intention, and it will make him a saint in his shop; his every-day business will be a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God by being done in obedience to his will and pleasure. He will buy and sell, and labor and travel, because by so doing he can do some good to himself and others. But then, as nothing can please God but what is wise, and reasonable, and holy, so he will neither buy nor sell, nor labor in any other manner nor to any other end but such as may be shown to be wise, and reasonable, and holy. He will therefore consider, not what arts, what methods, or application will soonest make him richer and greater than his brethren, or remove him from a shop to a life of state and pleasure; but he will consider what arts, what methods, what application can make worldly business most acceptable to God, and make a life of trade a life of holiness, devotion, and piety. This will be the temper and spirit of every tradesman; he can not stop short of these degrees of piety whenever it is his intention to please God in all his actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world.

And on the other hand, whoever is not of this spirit and temper in his trade and profes-

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sion, and does not carry it on only so far as is best subservient to a wise, and holy, and heavenly life, it is certain that he has not this intention; and yet without it, who can be shown to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

Again: let the gentleman of birth and fortune but have this intention, and you will see how it will carry him from every appearance of evil, to every instance of piety and goodness. He can not live by chance, or as humor and fancy carry him, because he knows that nothing can please God but a wise and regular course of life. He can not live in idleness and indulgence, in sports and gaming, in pleasures and intemperance, in vain expenses and high living, because these things can not be turned into means of piety and holiness, or made so many parts of a wise and religious life.

As he thus removes from all appearance of evil, so he hastens and aspires after every instance of goodness. He does not ask what is allowable and pardonable, but what is commendable and praiseworthy. He does not ask whether God will forgive the folly of our lives, the madness of our pleasures, the vanity of our expenses, the richness of our equipage, and the careless consumption of our time; but he asks, whether God is pleased with these things, or whether these are the appointed

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ways of gaining his favor? He does not inquire whether it be pardonable to hoard up money, to adorn ourselves with diamonds and gild our chariots, whilst the widow and the orphan, the sick and the prisoner, want to be relieved: but he asks whether God has required these things at our hands, whether we shall be called to account at the last day for the neglect of them; because it is not his intent to live in such ways as, for aught we know, God may perhaps pardon; but to be diligent in such ways as we know that God will infallibly reward.

He will not therefore look at the lives of Christians to learn how he ought to spend his estate, but he will look into the Scriptures, and make every doctrine, parable, precept, or instruction that relates to rich men a law to himself in the use of his estate.

He will have nothing to do with costly apparel, because the rich man in the gospel was clothed with purple and fine linen. He denies himself the pleasures and indulgences which his estate could procure, because our blessed Savior saith, "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation." He will have but one rule for charity, and that will be to spend all that he can that way, because the Judge of quick and dead hath said that all that is so given is given to him.

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He will have no hospitable table for the rich and wealthy to come and feast with him, in good eating and drinking, because our blessed Lord saith, "When thou makest a dinner, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed. For they can not recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:12-14).

He will waste no money in gilded roofs, or costly furniture: he will not be carried from pleasure to pleasure, in expensive state and equipage, because an inspired apostle hath said that all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Let not any one look upon this as an imaginary description of charity, that looks fine in the notion but can not be put in practise. For it is so far from being an imaginary, impracticable form of life, that it has been practised by great numbers of Christians in former ages, who were glad to turn their whole estates into a constant course of charity. And it is so far from being impossible now,

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that if we can find any Christians that sincerely intend to please God in all their actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world, whether they be young or old, single or married, men or women, if they have but this intention, it will be impossible for them to do otherwise. This one principle will infallibly carry them to this height of charity, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it.

For how is it possible for a man that intends to please God in the use of his money, and intends it because he judges it to be his greatest happiness, how is it possible for such a one, in such a state of mind, to bury his money in needless, impertinent finery, in covering himself or his horses with gold, whilst there are any works of piety and charity to be done with it, or any ways of spending it well?

This is as strictly impossible as for a man that intends to please God in his words to go into company on purpose to swear and lie. For as all waste and unreasonable expense is done designedly and with deliberation, so no one can be guilty of it whose constant intention is to please God in the use of his money.

I have chosen to explain this matter, by appealing to this intention, because it makes the case so plain, and because every one that has a mind may see it in the clearest light and feel it in the strongest manner, only by

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looking into his own heart. For it is as easy for every person to know whether he intends to please God in all his actions, as for any servant to know whether this be his intention toward his master. Every one also can as easily tell how he lays out his money, and whether he considers how to please God in it, as he can tell where his estate is, and whether it be in money or land. So that here is no plea left for ignorance or frailty as to this matter; everybody is in the light, and everybody has power. And no one can fail but he that is not so much a Christian as to intend to please God in the use of his estate.

You see two persons, one is regular in public and private prayer, the other is not. Now the reason of this difference is not this, that one hath strength and power to observe prayer and the other has not; but the reason is this, that one intends to please God in the duties of devotion and the other has no intention about it. Now the case is the same in the right or wrong use of our time or money. You see one person throwing away his time in sleep and idleness, in visiting and diversions, and his money in the most vain and unreasonable expenses. You see another careful of every day, dividing his hours by rules of reason and religion, and spending all his money in works of charity; now the difference

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is not owing to this, that one hath strength and power to do thus and the other hath not; but it is owing to this, that one intends to please God in the right use of all his time and all his money, and the other has no intention about it.

Here therefore let us judge ourselves sincerely; let us not vainly content ourselves with the common disorders of our lives, the vanity of our expenses, the folly of our diversions, the pride of our habits, the idleness of our lives, and the wasting of our time, fancying that these are such imperfections as we fall into through the unavoidable weakness and frailty of our natures; but let us be assured that these disorders of our common life are owing to this, that we have not so much Christianity as to intend to please God in all the actions of our lives, as the best and happiest thing in the world. So that we must not look upon ourselves in a state of common and pardonable imperfection, but in such a state as wants the first and most fundamental principles of Christianity, *viz.*, an intention to please God in all our actions.

And if any one was to ask himself, how it comes to pass that there are any degrees of sobriety which he neglects, any practises of humility which he wants, any method of charity which he does not follow, any rules

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of redeeming time which he does not observe, his own heart will tell him that it is because he never intended to be so exact in those duties. For whenever we fully intend it, it is as possible to conform to all this regularity of life as it is possible for a man to observe times of prayer.

So that the fault does not lie here, that we desire to be good and perfect, but through the weakness of our nature fall short of it; but it is because we have not piety enough to intend to be as good as we can, or to please God in all the actions of our life. This we see is plainly the case of him that spends his time in sports, when he should be at church; it is not his want of power, but his want of intention or desire to be there.

And the case is plainly the same in every other folly of human life. She that spends her time and money in the unreasonable ways and fashions of the world does not do so because she wants power to be wise and religious in the management of her time and money, but because she has no intention or desire of being so. When she feels this intention, she will find it as possible to act up to it as to be strictly sober and chaste, because it is her care and desire to be so.

This doctrine does not suppose that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our

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own power to make ourselves perfect. It only supposes that, through the want of a sincere intention of pleasing God in all our actions, we fall into such irregularities of life as by the ordinary means of grace we should have power to avoid. And that we have not that perfection, which our present state of grace makes us capable of, because we do not so much as intend to have it. It only teaches us, that the reason why you see no real mortification or self-denial, no eminent charity, no profound humility, no heavenly affection, no true contempt of the world, no Christian meekness, no sincere zeal, no eminent piety in the common lives of Christians, is this—because they do not so much as intend to be exact and exemplary in these virtues.

[Chapter III treats of the great danger and folly of not intending to be as eminent and exemplary as we can, in the practise of all Christian virtues.]

IV

We Can Please God In no State or Employment of Life, But By Intending and Devoting It All to His Honor and Glory

Having in the first chapter stated the general nature of devotion, and shown that it implies not any form of prayer, but a certain

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form of life, that is offered to God not at any particular times or places, but everywhere and in everything, I shall now descend to some particulars, and show how we are to devote our labor and employment, our time and fortunes, unto God.

As a good Christian should consider every place as holy, because God is there, so he should look upon every part of his life as a matter of holiness, because it is to be offered unto God.

The profession of a clergyman is a holy profession, because it is a ministration in holy things, an attendance at the altar. But worldly business is to be made holy unto the Lord by being done as a service to him, and in conformity to his divine will.

For as all men, and all things in the world, as truly belong unto God as any places, things, or persons that are devoted to divine service, so all things are to be used, and all persons are to act in their several states and employments, for the glory of God.

Men of worldly business, therefore, must not look upon themselves as at liberty to live to themselves, to sacrifice to their own humors and tempers, because their employment is of a worldly nature. But they must consider that as the world and all worldly professions as truly belong to God as persons and things

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that are devoted to the altar, so it is as much the duty of men in worldly business to live wholly unto God as it is the duty of those who are devoted to divine service. As the whole world is God's, so the whole world is to act for God. As all men have the same relation to God, as all men have all their powers and faculties from God, so all men are obliged to act for God, with all their powers and faculties. As all things are God's, so all things are to be used and regarded as the things of God. For men to abuse things on earth, and live to themselves, is the same rebellion against God as for angels to abuse things in heaven; because God is just the same Lord of all on earth as he is the Lord of all in heaven.

Things may, and must, differ in their use, but yet they are all to be used according to the will of God. Men may, and must, differ in their employments, but yet they must all act for the same ends, as dutiful servants of God, in the right and pious performance of several callings.

Clergymen must live wholly unto God in one particular way, that is, in the exercise of holy offices, in the ministration of prayers and sacraments, and a zealous distribution of spiritual goods. But men of other employments are in their particular ways as much

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obliged to act as the servants of God, and live wholly unto him in their several callings. This is the only difference between clergymen and people of other callings.

When it can be shown that men might be vain, covetous, sensual, worldly-minded, or proud in the exercise of their worldly business, then it will be allowable for clergymen to indulge the same tempers in their sacred profession. For tho these tempers are most odious and most criminal in clergymen, who, besides their baptismal vow, have a second time devoted themselves to God, to be his servants, not in the common offices of human life, but in the spiritual service of the most holy sacred things, and who are therefore to keep themselves as separate and different from the common life of other men, as a church or an altar is to be kept separate from houses and tables of common use; yet, as all Christians are by their baptism devoted to God, and made professors of holiness, so are they all in their several callings to live as holy and heavenly persons; doing every thing in their common life only in such a manner as it may be received by God, as a service done to him. For things spiritual and temporal, sacred and common, must, like men and angels, like heaven and earth, all conspire in the glory of God.

As there is but one God and Father of us all, whose glory gives light and life to everything that lives; whose presence fills all places, whose power supports all beings, whose providence ruleth all events; so every thing that lives, whether in heaven or earth, whether they be thrones or principalities, men or angels, they must all with one spirit, live wholly to the praise and glory of this one God and Father of them all. Angels as angels, in their heavenly ministrations, but men as men, women as women, bishops as bishops, priests as priests, and deacons as deacons; some with things spiritual, and some with things temporal, offering to God the daily sacrifice of a reasonable life, wise actions, purity of heart, and heavenly affections.

This is the common business of all persons in this world. It is not left to any women in the world to trifle away their time in the follies and impertinences of a fashionable life, nor to any men to resign themselves up to worldly cares and concerns; it is not left to the rich to gratify their passions in the indulgences and pride of life, nor to the poor, to vex and torment their hearts with the poverty of their state; but men and women, rich and poor, must, with bishops and priests, walk before God in the same wise and holy spirit, in the same denial of all vain tempers, and in

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the same discipline and care of their souls; not only because they have all the same rational nature and are servants of the same God, but because they all want the same holiness to make them fit for the same happiness, to which they are all called. It is therefore absolutely necessary for all Christians, whether men or women, to consider themselves as persons that are devoted to holiness; and so order their common ways of life, by such rules of reason and piety as may turn it into continual service unto Almighty God.

Now to make our labor or employment an acceptable service unto God, we must carry it on with the same spirit and temper that is required in giving of alms or any work of piety. For, if whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31); if we are to use this world as if we used it not; if we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1); if we are to live by faith and not by sight, and to have our conversation in heaven; then it is necessary that the common way of our life in every state be made to glorify God by such tempers as make our prayers and adorations acceptable to him. For if we are worldly or earthly-minded in our employments, if they are carried on with vain desires and covetous tem-

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pers only to satisfy ourselves, we can no more be said to live to the glory of God than gluttons and drunkards can be said to eat and drink to the glory of God.

As the glory of God is one and the same thing, so whatever we do suitable to it, must be done with one and the same spirit. That same state and temper of mind, which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our labor or employment a proper offering unto God. If a man labors to be rich, and pursues his business that he may raise himself to a state of figure and glory in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment; he is acting under other masters, and has no more title to a reward from God than he that gives alms that he may be seen, or prays that he may be heard of men. For vain and earthly desires are no more allowable in our employments than in our alms and devotions. For these tempers of worldly pride and vainglory are not only evil when they mix with our good works, but they have the same evil nature, and make us odious to God, when they enter into the common business of our employment. If it were allowable to indulge covetous or vain passions in our worldly employments, it would then be allowable to be vainglorious in our devotions. But as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable

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service but when they proceed from a heart truly devoted to God, so our common employment can not be reckoned a service to him but when it is performed with the same temper and piety of heart.

Most of the employments of life are in their own nature lawful; and all those that are so may be made a substantial part of our duty to God, if we engage in them only so far, and for such ends, as are suitable to beings that are to live above the world all the time that they live in the world. This is the only measure of our application to any worldly business; let it be what it will, where it will, it must have no more of our hands, our hearts, or our time, than is consistent with a hearty, daily, careful preparation of ourselves for another life. For as all Christians, as such, have renounced the world to prepare themselves, by daily devotion and universal holiness, for an eternal state of quite another nature, they must look upon worldly employments as upon worldly wants and bodily infirmities; things not to be desired, but only to be endured and suffered, till death and the resurrection has carried us to an eternal state of real happiness.

Now he that does not look at the things of this life in this degree of littleness can not be said either to feel or believe the greatest truths

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of Christianity. For if he thinks any thing great or important in human business, can he be said to feel or believe those Scriptures which represent this life, and the greatest things of life, as bubbles, vapors, dreams, and shadows?

If he thinks figure and show and worldly glory be any proper happiness of a Christian, how can he be said to feel or believe this doctrine: "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake?" For surely, if there was any real happiness in figure, and show, and worldly glory, if these things deserved our thoughts and care, it could not be matter of the highest joy, when we are torn from them by persecutions and sufferings. If, therefore, a man will so live as to show that he feels and believes the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he must live above the world: this is the temper that must enable him to do the business of life and yet live wholly unto God, and to go through some worldly employment with a heavenly mind. And it is as necessary that people live in their employments with this temper as it is necessary that their employment itself be lawful.

The husbandman that tilleth the ground is

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employed in an honest business that is necessary in life and very capable of being made an acceptable service unto God. But if he labors and toils, not to serve any reasonable ends of life, but in order to have his plow made of silver, and to have his horses harnessed in gold, the honesty of his employment is lost as to him, and his labor becomes his folly.

A tradesman may justly think that it is agreeable to the will of God for him to sell such things as are innocent and useful in life, such as help both himself and others to a reasonable support, and enable them to assist those that want to be assisted. But if instead of this, he trades only with regard to himself, without any other rule than that of his own temper, if it be his chief end in it to grow rich that he may live in figure and indulgence, and be able to retire from business to idleness and luxury, his trade, as to him, loses all its innocency, and is so far from being an acceptable service to God that it is only a more plausible course of covetousness, self-love, and ambition. For such a one turns the necessities of employment into pride and covetousness, just as the sot and epicure turn the necessities of eating and drinking into gluttony and drunkenness. Now he that is up early and late, that sweats and labors for

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these ends, that he may be some time or other rich and live in pleasure and indulgence, lives no more to the glory of God than he that plays and games for the same ends. For tho there is a great difference between trading and gaming, yet most of that difference is lost when men once trade with the same desires and tempers, and for the same ends, that others game. Charity and fine dressing are things very different; but if men give alms for the same reasons that others dress fine, only to be seen and admired, charity is then but like the vanity of fine clothes. In like manner, if the same motives make some people painful and industrious in their trades, which make others constant at gaming; such pains are but like the pains of gaming.

Calidus has traded above thirty years in the greatest city of the kingdom; he has been so many years constantly increasing his trade and his fortune. Every hour of the day is with him an hour of business; and tho he eats and drinks very heartily, yet every meal seems to be in a hurry, and he would say grace if he had time. Calidus ends every day at the tavern, but has not leisure to be there till nine o'clock. He is always forced to drink a good hearty glass, to drive thoughts of business out of his head, and make his spirits drowsy enough for sleep. He does business

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all the time that he is rising, and has settled several matters before he can get to his counting-room. His prayers are a short ejaculation or two, which he never misses in stormy, tempestuous weather, because he has always something or other at sea. Calidus will tell you with great pleasure, that he has been in this hurry for so many years, and that it must have killed him long ago, but that it has been a rule with him, to get out of the town every Saturday, and make the Sunday a day of quiet, and good refreshment in the country.

He is now so rich, that he would leave off his business, and amuse his old age with building and furnishing a fine house in the country, but that he is afraid he should grow melancholy if he was to quit his business. He will tell you with great gravity, that it is a dangerous thing for a man that has been used to get money ever to leave it off. If thoughts of religion happen at any time to steal into his head, Calidus contents himself with thinking that he never was a friend to heretics and infidels, that he has always been civil to the minister of his parish, and very often given something to the charity schools.

Now this way of life is at such a distance from all the doctrines and discipline of Christianity, that no one can live in it through

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ignorance or frailty. Calidus can no more imagine that he is born again of the Spirit (John 3): that he is in Christ a new creature (1 Pet. 2:11); that he lives here as a stranger and pilgrim, setting his affections on things above, and laying up treasures in heaven (Col. 3:1): he can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an apostle, working miracles and preaching the gospel.

It must also be owned, that the generality of trading people, especially in great towns, are too much like Calidus. You see them all the week buried in business, unable to think of any thing else; and then spending the Sunday in idleness and refreshment, in wandering into the country, in such visits and jovial meetings as make it often the worst day of the week.

Now they do not live thus, because they can not support themselves with less care and application to business; but they live thus because they want to grow rich in their trades, and to maintain their families in some such figure and degree of finery as a reasonable Christian life has no occasion for. Take away but this temper, and then people of all trades will find themselves at leisure to live every day like Christians, to be careful of every duty of the gospel, to live in a visible

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course of religion, and be every day strict observers both of private and public prayer.

Now the only way to do this is for people to consider their trade as something that they are obliged to devote to the glory of God, something that they are to do only in such a manner, as that they may make it a duty to him. Nothing can be right in business that is not under these rules. The apostle commands servants to be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. With good will doing service as unto the Lord, and not to men (Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22, 23).

This passage sufficiently shows that all Christians are to live wholly unto God in every state and condition, doing the work of their common calling in such a manner, and for such ends, as to make it a part of their devotion or service to God. For certainly if poor slaves are not to comply with their business as men-pleasers, if they are to look wholly unto God in all their actions, and serve in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord; surely men of other employments and conditions must be as much obliged to go through their business with the same singleness of heart; not as pleasing the vanity of their own

minds, not as gratifying their own selfish worldly passions, but as the servants of God in all that they have to do. For surely no one will say that a slave is to devote his state of life unto God, and make the will of God the sole rule and end of his service, but that a tradesman need not act with the same spirit of devotion in his business. For this is as absurd as to make it necessary for one man to be more just or faithful than another.

It is therefore absolutely certain that no Christian is to enter any farther into business, nor for any other ends, than such as he can in singleness of heart offer unto God as a reasonable service. For the Son of God has redeemed us for this only end, that we should, by a life of reason and piety, live to the glory of God; this is the only rule and measure for every order and state of life. Without this rule, the most lawful employment becomes a sinful state of life.

Take away this from the life of a clergyman, and his holy profession serves only to expose him to a greater damnation. Take away this from tradesmen, and shops are but so many houses of greediness and filthy lucre. Take away this from gentlemen, and the course of their life becomes a course of sensuality, pride, and wantonness. Take away this rule from our tables, and all falls into glut-

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tony and drunkenness. Take away this measure from our dress and habits, and all is turned into such paint, and glitter, and ridiculous ornaments, as are a real shame to the wearer. Take away this from the use of our fortunes, and you will find people sparing in nothing but charity. Take away this from our diversions, and you will find no sports too silly, nor any entertainments too vain and corrupt, to be the pleasure of Christians.

If therefore we desire to live unto God, it is necessary to bring our whole life under this law, to make his glory the sole rule and measure of our acting in every employment of life. For there is no other true devotion, but this of living devoted to God in the common business of our lives.

So that men must not content themselves with the lawfulness of their employments, but must consider whether they use them as they are to use every thing, as strangers and pilgrims (Col. 3:1; Pet. 1:15, 16; Eph. 5:26, 27), that are baptized into the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that are to follow him in a wise and heavenly course of life, in the mortification of all worldly desires, and in purifying and preparing their souls for the blessed enjoyment of God.

For to be vain, or proud, or covetous, or

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ambitious in the common course of our business, is as contrary to these holy tempers of Christianity, as cheating and dishonesty.

If a glutton was to say in excuse of his gluttony, that he only eats such things as it is lawful to eat, he would make as good an excuse for himself, as the greedy, covetous, ambitious tradesman that should say, he only deals in lawful business. For as a Christian is not only required to be honest, but to be of a Christian spirit, and make his life an exercise of humility, repentance, and heavenly affection, so all tempers that are contrary to these are as contrary to Christianity as cheating is contrary to honesty.

So that the matter plainly comes to this; all irregular tempers in trade and business, are but like irregular tempers in eating and drinking.

Proud views and vain desires, in our worldly employments, are as truly vices and corruptions as hypocrisy in prayer or vanity in alms. And there can be no reason given why vanity in our alms should make us odious to God, but what will prove any other kind of pride to be equally odious. He that labors and toils in a calling that he may make a figure in the world and draw the eyes of people upon the splendor of his condition, is as far from the pious humility of a Christian as he

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that gives alms that he may be seen of men. For the reason why pride and vanity in our prayers and alms renders them an unacceptable service to God is not because there is any thing particular in prayers and alms that can not allow of pride, but because pride is in no respect, nor in any thing made for man: it destroys the piety of our prayers and alms, because it destroys the piety of every thing that it touches, and renders every action that it governs incapable of being offered unto God.

So that if we could so divide ourselves as to be humble in some respects and proud in others, such humility would be of no service to us, because God requires us as truly to be humble in all our actions and designs as to be true and honest in all our actions and designs.

And as a man is not honest and true because he is so to a great many people, or upon several occasions, but because truth and honesty is the measure of all his dealings with everybody; so the case is the same in humility, or any other temper, it must be the general ruling habit of our minds and extend itself to all our actions and designs, before it can be imputed to us.

We indeed sometimes talk as if a man might be humble in some things and proud in others;

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humble in his dress, but proud in his learning; humble in his person, but proud in his views and designs. But tho this may pass in common discourse, where few things are said according to strict truth, it can not be allowed when we examine into the nature of our actions.

It is very possible for a man that lives by cheating to be very punctual in paying for what he buys; but then every one is assured that he does not do so out of any principle of true honesty.

In like manner, it is very possible for a man that is proud of his estate, ambitious in his views, or vain of his learning, to disregard his dress and person in such a manner as a truly humble man would do; but to suppose that he does so out of a true principle of religious humility is full as absurd as to suppose that a cheat pays for what he buys out of a principle of religious honesty.

As therefore all kinds of dishonesty destroy our pretenses to an honest principle of mind, so all kinds of pride destroy our pretenses to an humble spirit.

No one wonders that those prayers and alms which proceed from pride and ostentation are odious to God; but yet it is as easy to show that pride is as pardonable there as any where else. If we could suppose that God re-

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jects pride in our prayers and alms, but bears with pride in our dress, our persons, or estates, it would be the same thing as to suppose that God condemns falsehood in some actions, but allows it in others. For pride in one thing differs from pride in another thing as the robbing of one man differs from the robbing of another.

Again: if pride and ostentation is so odious that it destroys the merit and worth of the most reasonable actions, surely it must be equally odious in those actions which are only founded in the weakness and infirmity of our nature. As thus, alms are commanded by God as excellent in themselves, as true instances of a divine temper, but clothes are only allowed to cover our shame; surely therefore it must at least be as odious a degree of pride, to be vain in our clothes, as to be vain in our alms.

Again: we are commanded to pray without ceasing, as a means of rendering our souls more exalted and divine, but we are forbidden to lay up treasures upon earth; and can we think that it is not as bad to be vain of those treasures which we are forbidden to lay up as to be vain of those prayers which we are commanded to make?

Women are required to have their heads covered, and to adorn themselves with shame-

facedness (1 Cor. 11:13; 1 Tim. 2:9); if therefore they are vain in those things which are expressly forbidden, if they patch and paint that part which can only be adorned by shamefacedness, surely they have as much to repent of for such a pride as they have whose pride is the motive to their prayers and charity. This must be granted, unless we will say that it is more pardonable to glory in our shame than to glory in our virtue.

All these instances are only to show us the great necessity of such a regular and uniform piety, as extends itself to all the actions of our common life. That we must eat and drink, and dress and discourse, according to the sobriety of the Christian spirit, engage in no employments but such as we can truly devote unto God, nor pursue them any farther than so far as conduces to the reasonable ends of a holy devout life. That we must be honest, not only on particular occasions, and in such instances as are applauded in the world, easy to be performed, and free from danger or loss, but from such a living principle of justice as makes us love truth and integrity in all its instances, follow it through all dangers, and against all opposition; as knowing that the more we pay for any truth, the better is our bargain, and that then our integrity becomes a pearl, when we have parted with all to keep it.

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That we must be humble, not only in such instances as are expected in the world, or suitable to our tempers, or confined to particular occasions, but in such a humility of spirit as renders us meek and lowly in the whole course of our lives, as shows itself in our dress, our person, our conversation, our enjoyment of the world, the tranquility of our minds, patience under injuries, submission to superiors, and condescensions to those that are below us, and in all the outward actions of our lives.

That we must devote not only times and places to prayer, but be everywhere in the spirit of devotion, with hearts always set toward heaven, looking up to God in all our actions, and doing every thing as his servants, living in the world as in a holy temple of God, and always worshiping him, tho not with our lips, yet with the thankfulness of our hearts, the holiness of our actions, and the pious and charitable use of all his gifts. That we must not only send up petitions and thoughts now and then to heaven, but must go through all our worldly business with a heavenly spirit, as members of Christ's mystical body, that with new hearts and new minds are to turn an earthly life into a preparation for a life of greatness and glory in the kingdom of heaven.

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Now the only way to arrive at this piety of spirit, is to bring all your actions to the same rule as your devotions and alms. You very well know what it is that makes the piety of your alms or devotions; now the same rules, the same regard to God, must render every thing else that you do a fit and acceptable service unto God.

Enough, I hope, has been said, to show you the necessity of thus introducing religion into all the actions of your common life, and of living and acting with the same regard to God in all that you do as in your prayers and alms.

Eating is one of the lowest actions of our lives, it is common to us with mere animals, yet we see that the piety of all ages of the world has turned this ordinary action of an animal life into a piety to God, by making every meal to begin and end with devotion.

We see yet some remains of this custom in most Christian families—some such little formality as shows you that people used to call upon God at the beginning and end of their meals. But, indeed, it is now generally so performed as to look more like a mockery upon devotion than any solemn application of the mind unto God. In one house you may perhaps see the head of the family just pulling off his hat; in another, half getting up

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from his seat; another shall, it may be, proceed as far as to make as if he said something; but, however, these little attempts are the remains of some devotion that was formerly used at such times, and are proofs that religion formerly belonged to this part of common life. But to such a pass we are now come, that tho the custom is yet preserved, yet we can hardly bear with him that seems to perform it with any degree of seriousness, and look upon it as a sign of a fanatical temper, if a man has not done it as soon as he begins.

I would not be thought to plead for the necessity of long prayers at these times; but thus much I think may be said, that if prayer is proper at these times, we ought to oblige ourselves to use such a form of words as should show that we solemnly appeal to God for such graces and blessings as are then proper to the occasion. Otherwise the mock ceremony, instead of blessing our victuals, does but accustom us to trifle with devotion, and give us a habit of being unaffected with our prayers.

If every head of a family was, at the return of every meal, to oblige himself to make a solemn adoration of God in such a decent manner as becomes a devout mind, it would be very likely to teach him that swearing, sensuality, gluttony, and loose discourse, were

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very improper at those meals which were to begin and end with devotion.

And if in these days of general corruption this part of devotion is fallen into a mock ceremony, it must be imputed to this cause, that sensuality and intemperance have got too great a power over us to suffer us to add any devotion to our meals. But thus much must be said, that when we are as pious as Jews and heathens of all ages have been, we shall think it proper to pray at the beginning and end of our meals.

I have appealed to this pious custom of all ages of the world, as a proof of the reasonableness of the doctrine of this and the foregoing chapters: that is, as a proof that religion is to be the rule and measure of all the actions of ordinary life. For surely, if we are not to eat, but under such rules of devotion, it must plainly appear, that whatever else we do, must, in its proper way, be done with the same regard to the glory of God, and agreeably to the principles of a devout and pious mind.

[Chaps. V.-XVI. treat the following subjects:

V. Persons that are Free from the Necessity of Labor and Employments, are to Consider Themselves as Devoted to God in a Higher Degree.

VI. Containing the great Obligations, and the Great Advantages of Making a Wise and Religious Use of our Estates and Fortunes.

VII. How the Imprudent Use of an Estate Corrupts all the Tempers of the Mind, and Fills the Heart with Poor

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and Ridiculous Passions Through the Whole Course of Life; Represented in the Character of Flavia.

VIII. How the Wise and Pious Use of an Estate, Naturally Carrieth us to Great Perfection in all the Virtues of the Christian Life; Represented in the Character of Miranda.

IX. Containing some reflections upon the Life of Miranda; and Showing how it may, and ought to be Imitated by all her Sex.

X. Showing how All Orders and Ranks of Men and Women of all Ages, are Obligated to Devote Themselves unto God.

XI. Showing how Great Devotion Fills our Lives with the Greatest Peace and Happiness that can be enjoyed in this World.

XII. The happiness of a life wholly devoted to God, Proved from the Vanity, the Sensuality, and the Ridiculous Poor Enjoyments, which they are forced to take up with, who live according to their own Humors. This Represented in Various Characters.

XIII. That not only a Life of Vanity, or Sensuality, but even the most Regular Kind of Life that is not Governed by Great Devotion, Sufficiently Shows its Miseries, its Wants and Emptiness, to the Eyes of all the World. This Represented in Various Characters.

XIV. Concerning that Part of Devotion Which Relates to Times and Hours of Prayer. Of Daily Early Prayer in the Morning. How we are to Improve our Forms of Prayer, and how to Increase the Spirit of Devotion.

XV. Of Chanting or Singing of Psalms in our Private Devotions. Of the Excellency and Benefit of this Kind of Devotion. Of the Great Effects it hath upon our Hearts. Of the Means of Performing it in the Best Manner.

XVI. Recommending Devotions at Nine o'clock in the Morning, called in Scripture the Third Hour of the Day. The Subject of these Prayers is Humility.]

**Showing How Difficult the Practise of
Humility Is Made By the General
Spirit and Temper of the World.
Christianity Requireth Us to Live Con-
trary to the World**

Every person, when he first applies himself to the exercise of the virtue of humility, must, as I said before, consider himself as a learner, that is, to learn something that is contrary to former tempers and habits of mind, and which can be got only by daily and constant practise. He has not only as much to do, as he that has some new art or science to learn, but he has also a great deal to unlearn: He is to forget and lay aside his own spirit, which has been a long while fixing and forming itself; he must forget and depart from abundance of passions and opinions, which the fashion, and vogue, and spirit of the world have made natural to him. He must lay aside his own spirit: because as we are born in sin, so in pride, which is as natural to us as self-love and continually springs from it. And this is the reason why Christianity is so often represented as a new birth, and a new spirit. He must lay aside the opinions and passions which he has re-

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ceived from the world ; because the vogue and fashion of the world, by which we have been carried away as in a torrent, before we could pass right judgments of the value of things, is, in many respects, contrary to humility ; so that we must unlearn what the spirit of the world has taught us, before we can be governed by the spirit of humility.

This devil is called in Scripture the prince of this world because he has great power in it, because many of its rules and principles are invented by this evil spirit, the father of all lies and falsehood, to separate us from God and prevent our return to happiness.

Now, according to the spirit and vogue of this world, whose corrupt air we have all breathed, there are many things that pass for great and honorable, and most desirable, which yet are so far from being so that the true greatness and honor of our nature consist in the not desiring them.

To abound in wealth, to have fine houses, and rich clothes, to be beautiful in our persons, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow-creatures, to command the bows and obeisance of other people, to be looked on with admiration, to overcome our enemies with power, to subdue all that oppose us, to set out ourselves in as much splendor as we can, to live highly and magnificently, to eat, and

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drink, and delight ourselves in the most costly manner, these are the great, the honorable, the desirable things, to which the spirit of the world turns the eyes of all people. And many a man is afraid of standing still and not engaging in the pursuit of these things, lest the same world should take him for a fool.

The history of the gospel is chiefly the history of Christ's conquest over this spirit of the world. And the number of true Christians is only the number of those who, following the Spirit of Christ, have lived contrary to this spirit of the world. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Again, "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world. Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This is the language of the whole New Testament. This is the mark of Christianity; you are to be dead, that is, dead to the spirit and temper of the world, and live a new life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

But notwithstanding the clearness and plainness of these doctrines which thus renounce the world, yet great part of Christians live and die slaves to the customs and temper of the world. How many people swell with pride and vanity for such things as they would not know how to value at all, but that

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they are admired in the world? Would a man take ten years more drudgery in business to add two horses more to his coach, but that he knows that the world most of all admires a coach and six? How fearful are many people of having their houses poorly furnished, or themselves meanly clothed, for this only reason, lest the world should make no account of them and place them among low and mean people? How often would a man have yielded to the haughtiness and ill-nature of others, and shown a submissive temper, but that he dares not pass for such a poor-spirited man in the opinion of the world? Many a man would often drop a resentment and forgive an affront, but that he is afraid, if he should, the world would not forgive him. How many would practise Christian temperance and sobriety in its utmost perfection, were it not for the censure which the world passes upon such a life? Others have frequent intentions of living up to the rules of Christian perfection, which they are frightened from, by considering what the world would say of them.

Thus do the impressions which we have received from living in the world enslave our minds, that we dare not attempt to be eminent in the sight of God and holy angels for fear of being little in the eyes of the world.

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From this quarter arises the greatest difficulty of humility, because it can not subsist in any mind, but so far as it is dead to the world and has parted with all desires of enjoying its greatness and honors. So that in order to be truly humble, you must unlearn all those notions, which you have been all your life learning from this corrupt spirit of the world. You can make no stand against the assaults of pride, the meek affections of humility can have no place in your soul, till you stop the power of the world over you, and resolve against a blind obedience to its laws.

And when you are once advanced thus far, as to be able to stand still in the torrent of worldly fashions and opinions and examine the worth and value of things which are most admired and valued in the world, you have gone a great way in the gaining of your freedom, and have laid a good foundation for the amendment of your heart. For as great as the power of the world is, it is all built upon a blind obedience, and we need only open our eyes to get quit of its power.

Ask who you will, learned or unlearned, every one seems to know and confess that the general temper and spirit of the world is nothing else but humor, folly, and extravagance. Who will not own that the wisdom of philosophy, the piety of religion, were always

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confined to a small number? and is not this expressly owning and confessing that the common spirit and temper of the world is neither according to the wisdom of philosophy nor the piety of religion?

The world, therefore, seems enough condemned even by itself to make it very easy for a thinking man to be of the same judgment.

And therefore, I hope you will not think it a hard saying that, in order to be humble, you must withdraw your obedience from that vulgar spirit, which gives laws to fops and coquettes, and form your judgments according to the wisdom of philosophy and the piety of religion. Who would be afraid of making such a change as this? Again, to lessen your fear and regard to the opinion of the world, think how soon the world will disregard you, and have no more thought or concern about you, than about the poorest animal that died in a ditch. Your friends, if they can, may bury you with some distinction, and set up a monument, to let posterity see that your dust lies under such a stone; and when that is done, all is done. Your place is filled up by another, the world is just in the same state it was, you are blotted out of its sight, and as much forgotten by the world as if you had never belonged to it.

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Think upon the rich, the great, and the learned persons, that have made great figures, and been high in the esteem of the world; many of them died in your time, and yet they are sunk, and lost, and gone, and as much disregarded by the world as if they had been only so many bubbles of water. Think again, how many poor souls see heaven lost, and lie now expecting a miserable eternity for their service and homage to a world, that thinks itself every whit as well without them, and is just as merry as it was when they were in it.

Is it therefore worth your while to lose the smallest degree of virtue for the sake of pleasing so bad a master, and so false a friend, as the world is? Is it worth your while to bow the knee to such an idol as this, that so soon will have neither eyes, nor ears, nor a heart to regard you, instead of serving that great, and holy, and mighty God, that will make all his servants partakers of his own eternity? Will you let the fear of a false world, that has no love for you, keep you from the fear of that God who has only created you, that he may love and bless you to all eternity?

Lastly, you must consider what behavior the profession of Christianity requireth of you with regard to the world.

Now this is plainly delivered in these

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words: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). Christianity, therefore, implieth a deliverance from this world; and he that professeth it, professeth to live contrary to every thing, and every temper, that is peculiar to this evil world.

St. John declareth this opposition to the world in this manner: "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God" (1 John 4:5). This is the description of the followers of Christ; and it is proof enough that no people are to be reckoned Christians in reality who in their hearts and tempers belong to this world. "We know," saith the same apostle, "that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Christians, therefore, can no farther know that they are of God than so far as they know they are not of the world; that is, that they do not live according to the ways and spirit of the world. For all the ways, and maxims, and politics, and tempers of the world, lie in wickedness. And he is only of God, or born of God in Christ Jesus, who has overcome this world, that is, who has chosen to live by faith and govern his actions by the principles of a wisdom revealed from God by Christ Jesus.

St. Paul takes it for a certainty, so well

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known to Christians, that they are no longer to be considered as living in this world, that he thus argues from it, as from an undeniable principle, concerning the abolishing the rites of the Jewish law: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" (Col. 2: 20). Here could be no argument in this, but in the apostle's taking it for undeniable that Christians knew that their profession required them to have done with all the tempers, and passions of the world, to live as citizens of the new Jerusalem, and to have their conversations in heaven.

Our blessed Lord himself, has fully determined this point, in these words: "They are not of this world, as I am not of this world." This is the state of Christianity with regard to this world. If you are not thus out of and contrary to the world, you want the distinguishing mark of Christianity; you do not belong to Christ but by being out of the world, as he was out of it.

We may deceive ourselves, if we please, with vain and softening comments upon these words; but they are and will be understood, in their first simplicity and plainness, by every one that reads them in the same spirit that our blessed Lord spoke them. And to

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understand them in any lower, less significant meaning is to let carnal wisdom explain away that doctrine by which itself was to be destroyed.

The Christian's great conquest over the world is all contained in the mystery of Christ upon the cross. It was there, and from thence, that he taught all Christians how they were to come out of, and conquer the world, and what they were to do in order to be his disciples. And all the doctrines, sacraments, and institutions of the gospel are only so many explications of the meaning and applications of the benefit of this great mystery. And the state of Christianity implieth nothing else but an entire, absolute conformity to that spirit, which Christ showed in the mysterious sacrifice of himself upon the cross.

Every man therefore is only so far a Christian, as he partakes of the Spirit of Christ. It was this that made St. Paul so passionately express himself: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But why does he glory? Is it because Christ had suffered in his stead, and had excused him from suffering? No, by no means. But it was because his Christian profession had called him to the honor of suffering with Christ, and of dying to the world under reproach and contempt, as he had done

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upon the cross. For he immediately adds: "By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). This you see was the reason of his glory in the cross of Christ, because it had called him to a like state of death and crucifixion to the world.

Thus was the cross of Christ, in St. Paul's days, the glory of Christians; not as it signified their not being ashamed to own a master that was crucified, but as it signified their glorying in a religion, which was nothing else but a doctrine of the cross, that called them to the same suffering spirit, the same sacrifice of themselves, the same renunciation of the world, the same humility and meekness, the same patient bearing of injuries, reproaches, and contempts, and the same dying to all the greatness, honors and happiness of this world, which Christ showed upon the cross.

To have a true idea of Christianity, we must not consider our blessed Lord as suffering in our stead, but as our representative, acting in our name, and with such particular merit, as to make our joining with him acceptable unto God. He suffered, and was a sacrifice, to make our sufferings and sacrifice of ourselves fit to be received by God. And we are to suffer, to be crucified, to die, to rise with Christ, or else his crucifixion, death and resurrection, will profit us nothing.

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The necessity of this conformity to all that Christ did, and suffered upon our account, is very plain from the whole tenor of Scripture. First, as to his sufferings, this is the only condition of our being saved by them, if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. Secondly, as to his crucifixion: "Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him," etc. (Rom. 6:6). Here you see, Christ is not crucified in our stead; but unless our old man be really crucified with him, the cross of Christ will profit us nothing. Thirdly, as to the death of Christ, the condition is this: "If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." If therefore Christ be dead alone, if we are not dead with him, we are as sure, from this Scripture, that we shall not live with him.

Lastly, as to the resurrection of Christ, the Scripture sheweth us how we are to partake of the benefit of it: "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). Thus you see, how plainly the Scripture sets forth our blessed Lord as our representative, acting and suffering in our name, binding and obliging us to conform to all that he did and suffered for us. It was for this reason, that the holy Jesus said of his disciples, and in them of all true

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believers, they are not of this world as I am not of this world. Because all true believers conforming to the sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, live no longer after the spirit and temper of this world, but their life is hid with Christ in God.

This is the state of separation from the world, to which all orders of Christians are called. They must so far renounce all worldly tempers, be so far governed by the things of another life, as to show that they are truly and really crucified, dead, and risen with Christ. And it is as necessary for all Christians to conform to this great change of spirit, to be thus in Christ new creatures, as it was necessary that Christ should suffer, die, and rise again, for our salvation.

How high the Christian life is placed above the ways of this world is wonderfully described by St. Paul, in these words: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh; yet henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:16).

He that feels the force and spirit of these words can hardly bear any human interpretation of them. Henceforth, says he, that is, since the death and resurrection of Christ, the

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state of Christianity is become so glorious a state that we do not even consider Christ himself as in the flesh upon earth, but as a God of glory in heaven; we know and consider ourselves not as men in the flesh, but as fellow-members of a new society, that are to have all our hearts, our tempers, and conversation in heaven. Thus is it that Christianity has placed us out of and above the world; and we fall from our calling as soon as we fall into the tempers of the world.

Now as it was the spirit of the world that nailed our blessed Lord to the cross; so every man that has the spirit of Christ, that opposes the world as he did, will certainly be crucified by the world some way or other. For Christianity still lives in the same world that Christ did; and these two will be utter enemies, till the kingdom of darkness is entirely at an end.

Had you lived with our Savior as his true disciple, you had then been hated as he was; and if you now live in his spirit, the world will be the same enemy to you now that it was to him then. "If you were of the world," saith our blessed Lord, "the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

We are apt to lose the true meaning of these words, by considering them only as an

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historical description of something that was the state of our Savior and his disciples at that time. But this is reading the Scriptures as a dead letter; for they exactly describe the state of true Christians at this, and all other times, to the end of the world. For as true Christianity is nothing else but the spirit of Christ, so whether that spirit appear in the person of Christ himself, or his apostles, or followers in any age, it is the same thing; whoever hath his spirit will be hated, despised, and condemned by the world, as he was. For the world will always love its own, and none but its own: this is as certain and unchangeable, as the contrariety betwixt light and darkness. When the holy Jesus saith. "If the world hate you," he does not add by way of consolation, that it may some time or other cease its hatred, or that it will not always hate them; but he only gives this as a reason for their bearing it, you know that it hated me, before it hated you; signifying, that it was he, that is, his spirit, that by reason of its contrariety to the world was then, and always would be, hated by it.

You will perhaps say that the world is now become Christian, at least that part of it where we live; and therefore the world is not now to be considered in that state of opposition to Christianity as when it was heathen.

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It is granted, the world now professeth Christianity. But will any one say, that this Christian world is of the spirit of Christ? Are its general tempers the tempers of Christ? Are the passions of sensuality, self-love, pride, covetousness, ambition, and vainglory, less contrary to the spirit of the gospel now they are among Christians than when they were among heathens? Or will you say that the tempers and passions of the heathen world are lost and gone?

Consider secondly, what you are to mean by the world. Now this is fully described to our hands by St. John. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, etc. (1 John 2:6). This is an exact and full description of the world. Now will you say, that this world is become Christian? But if all this still subsists, then the same world is now in being, and the same enemy to Christianity, that it was in St. John's days. It was this world that St. John condemned, as being not of the Father; whether therefore it outwardly professeth, or openly persecuteth Christianity, it is still in the same state of contrariety to the true spirit and holiness of the gospel. And indeed the world by professing Christianity is so far from being a less dangerous enemy than it was before, that it has by its favors destroyed

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more Christians than ever it did by the most violent persecution.

We must therefore be so far from considering the world as in a state of less enmity and opposition to Christianity than it was in the first times of the gospel, that we must guard against it as a greater and more dangerous enemy now, than it was in those times. It is a greater enemy, because it has greater power over Christians by its favors, riches, honors, rewards, and protections than it had by the fire and fury of its persecutions. It is a more dangerous enemy, by having lost its appearance of enmity. Its outward profession of Christianity makes it no longer considered as an enemy, and therefore the generality of people are easily persuaded to resign themselves up to be governed and directed by it.

How many consciences are kept at quiet, upon no other foundation, but because they sin under the authority of the Christian world? How many directions of the gospel lie by unregarded, and how unconcerned do particular persons read them, for no other reason but because they seem unregarded by the Christian world? How many compliances do people make to the Christian world, without any hesitation or remorse; which if they had been required of them only by heathens, would have been refused as contrary to the

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holiness of Christianity. Who could be content with seeing how contrary his life is to the gospel, but because he sees that he lives as the Christian world doth? Who that reads the gospel, would want to be persuaded of the necessity of great self-denial, humility, and poverty of spirit, but that the authority of the world has banished this doctrine of the cross?

There is nothing, therefore, that a good Christian ought to be more suspicious of, or more constantly guard against, than the authority of the Christian world. And all the passages of Scripture which represent the world as contrary to Christianity, which require our separation from it, as from a mammon of unrighteousness, a monster of iniquity, are all to be taken in the same strict sense, in relation to the present world. For the change that the world has undergone has only altered its methods, but not lessened its power of destroying religion.

Christians had nothing to fear from the heathen world but the loss of their lives; but the world, become a friend, makes it difficult for them to save their religion. Whilst pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition, had only the authority of the heathen world, Christians were thereby made more intent upon the contrary virtues. But when pride,

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sensuality, covetousness, and ambition, have the authority of the Christian world, then private Christians are in the utmost danger, not only of being shamed out of the practise, but of losing the very notion of the piety of the gospel.

There is therefore hardly any possibility of saving yourself from the present world, but by considering it as the same wicked enemy to all true holiness as it is represented in the Scriptures; and by assuring yourself that it is as dangerous to conform to its tempers and passions now it is Christian as when it was heathen. For only ask yourself, Is the piety, the humility, the sobriety of the Christian world, the piety, the humility, and sobriety of the Christian spirit? If not, how can you be more undone by any world, than by conforming to that which is Christian? Need a man do more to make his soul unfit for the mercy of God than by being greedy and ambitious of honor? Yet how can a man renounce this temper without renouncing the spirit and temper of the world, in which you now live? How can a man be made more incapable of the spirit of Christ than by a wrong value for money? And yet how can he be more wrong in his value of it than by following the authority of the Christian world?

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Nay, in every order and station of life, whether of learning or business, either in Church or State, you can not act up to the spirit of religion, without renouncing the most general temper and behavior of those, who are of the same order and business as yourself. And tho human prudence seems to talk mighty wisely about the necessity of avoiding particularities, yet he that dares not be so weak as to be particular will be often obliged to avoid the most substantial duties of Christian piety.

These reflections will, I hope, help you to break through those difficulties, and resist those temptations, which the authority and fashion of the world have raised against the practise of Christian humility.

[The remaining chapters treat of the following subjects :

XVIII. Showing how the education which men generally receive in their youth, makes the doctrines of humility difficult to be practised. The spirit of a better education, represented in the character of Paternus.

XIX. Showing how the method of educating daughters makes it difficult for them to enter into the spirit of Christian humility. How miserably they are injured and abused by such an education. The spirit of a better education, represented in the character of Eusebia.

XX. Recommending devotion at twelve o'clock, called in Scripture the sixth hour of the day. This frequency of devotion equally desirable by all orders of people. Universal love is here recommended to be the subject of prayer at this hour. Of intercession, as an act of universal love.

XXI. Of the Necessity and Benefit of Intercession, Considered as an Exercise of Universal Love. How all Orders of Men Are to Pray and Intercede With God for One

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Another. How Naturally Such Intercession Amends and Reforms the Hearts of Those That Use It.

XXII. Recommending devotion at three o'clock, called in Scripture the ninth hour of the day. The subject of prayer at this hour is resignation to the Divine Pleasure. The nature and duty of conformity to the will of God in all our actions and designs.

XXIII. Of evening prayer. Of the nature and necessity of examination. How we are to be particular in the confession of all our sins. How we are to fill our minds with a just horror and dread of all sin.

XXIV. The conclusion. Of the excellency and greatness of a devout spirit.]

The Spirit of Love

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You had no occasion to make any apology for the manner of your letter to me; for tho you very well know that I have as utter an aversion to waste my time and thoughts in matters of theological debate, as in any contentions merely of a worldly nature, as knowing that the former are generally as much, if not more, hurtful to the heart of man than the latter; yet as your objections rather tend to stir up the powers of love than the wrangle of a rational debate, so I consider them only as motives and occasions of edifying both you and myself with the truth, the power, and divine blessedness of the spirit of love.

You say, "There is nothing in all my writings that has more affected you than that

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spirit of love that breathes in them; and that you wish for nothing so much as to have a living sensibility of the power, life, and religion of love. But you have these two objections often rising in your mind: First, that this doctrine of pure and universal love may be too refined and imaginary; because you find, that however you like it, yet you can not attain to it, or overcome all that in your nature which is contrary to it, do what you can; and so are only able to be an admirer of that love which you can not lay hold of. Secondly, because you find so much said in Scripture of a righteousness and justice, a wrath and vengeance, of God, that must be atoned and satisfied, etc., that tho you are in love with that description of the deity which I have given, as a being that is all love, yet you have some doubt whether the Scripture will allow of it."

Thus stand your objections, which will fall into nothing as soon as you look at them from a right point of view: which will then be, as soon as you have found the true ground of the nature, power, and necessity of the blessed spirit of love.

Now, the spirit of love has this original: God, as considered in himself, in his holy being, before any thing is brought forth by him, or out of him, is only an eternal will to all

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goodness. This is the one eternal immutable God, that from eternity to eternity changeth not, that can be neither more nor less, nor any thing else, but an eternal will to all the goodness that is in himself and can come from him. The creation of ever so many worlds, or systems of creatures, adds nothing to, nor takes any thing from, this immutable God: he always was, and always will be, the same immutable Will to all goodness. So that as certainly as he is the Creator, so certainly he is the blesser of every created thing, and can give nothing but blessing, goodness, and happiness from himself, because he has in himself nothing else to give. It is much more possible for the sun to give forth darkness than for God to do, or be, or give forth, any thing but blessing and goodness. Now this is the ground and original of the spirit of love in the creature; it is and must be a will to all goodness, and you have not the spirit of love till you have this will to all goodness at all times and on all occasions. You may indeed do many works of love, and delight in them, especially at such times as they are not inconvenient to you, or contradictory to your state, or temper, or occurrences in life. But the spirit of love is not in you, till it is the spirit of your life, till you live freely, willingly, and universally, according to it. For

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every spirit acts with freedom and universality, according to what it is. It needs no command to live its own life or be what it is, no more than you need bid wrath be wrathful. And therefore when love is the spirit of your life, it will have the freedom and universality of a spirit; it will always live and work in love, not because of this or that, here or there, but because the spirit of love can only love, wherever it is, or goes, or whatever is done to it. As the sparks know no motion but that of flying upwards, whether it be in the darkness of the night or in the light of the day, so the spirit of love is always in the same course; it knows no difference of time, place, or persons; but whether it gives or forgives, bears or forbears, it is equally doing its own delightful work, equally blest from itself. For the spirit of love, wherever it is, is its own blessing and happiness, because it is the truth and reality of God in the soul; and therefore is in the same joy of life, and is the same good to itself, everywhere, and on every occasion.

Oh! sir, would you know the blessing of all blessings, it is this God of love dwelling in your soul, and killing every root of bitterness, which is the pain and torment of every earthly, selfish love. For all wants are satisfied, all disorders of nature are removed, no

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life is any longer a burden, every day is a day of peace, every thing you meet becomes a help to you, because every thing you see or do is all done in the sweet, gentle element of love. For as love has no by-ends, wills nothing but its own increase, so every thing is as oil to its flame; it must have that which it wills, and can not be disappointed, because every thing naturally helps it to live in its own way, and to bring forth its own work. The spirit of love does not want to be rewarded, honored, or esteemed; its only desire is to propagate itself, and become the blessing and happiness of every thing that wants it. And therefore it meets wrath, and evil, and hatred, and opposition, with the same one will as the light meets the darkness, only to overcome it with all its blessings. Did you want to avoid the wrath and ill will, or to gain the favor, of any persons, you might easily miss of your ends; but if you have no will but to all goodness, every thing you meet, be it what it will, must be forced to be assistant to you. For the wrath of an enemy, the treachery of a friend, and every other evil, only helps the spirit of love to be more triumphant, to live its own life, and find all its own blessings in an higher degree. Whether, therefore, you consider perfection or happiness, it is all included in the spirit of love,

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and must be so for this reason, because the infinitely perfect, and happy God is mere love, an unchangeable will to all goodness; and therefore every creature must be corrupt, and unhappy, so far as it is led by any other will than the one will to all goodness. Thus you see the ground, the nature and perfection, of the spirit of love. Let me now, in a word or two, show you the necessity of it. Now the necessity is absolute and unchangeable. No creature can be a child of God but because the goodness of God is in it; nor can it have any union or communion with the goodness of the deity, till its life is a spirit of love. This is the one only band of union betwixt God and the creature. All besides this, or that is not this, call it by what name you will, is only so much error, fiction, impurity, and corruption, got into the creature; and must of all necessity be entirely separated from it, before it can have that purity and holiness, which alone can see God, or find the divine life. For as God is an immutable will to all goodness, so the divine will can unite or work with no creaturely will but that which willeth with him only that which is good. Here the necessity is absolute; nothing will do instead of this will; all contrivances of holiness, all forms of religious piety, signify nothing, without this will to

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all goodness. For as the will to all goodness is the whole nature of God, so it must be the whole nature of every service or religion that can be acceptable to him. For nothing serves God, or worships, and adores him, but that which wills and worketh with him. For God can delight in nothing but his own will, and his own Spirit, because all goodness is included in it, and can be nowhere else. And therefore every thing that followeth an own will, or an own spirit, forsaketh the one will to all goodness; and whilst it doth so, hath no capacity for the light and spirit of God. The necessity, therefore, of the spirit of love is what God himself can not dispense with in the creature, no more than he can deny himself or act contrary to his own holy Being. But as it was his will to all goodness that brought forth angels and the spirits of men, so he can will nothing in their existence but that they should live and work, and manifest that same spirit of love and goodness which brought them into being. Every thing, therefore, but the will and life of goodness is an apostasy in the creature, and is rebellion against the whole nature of God.

There is no peace, nor ever can be, for the soul of man but in the purity and perfection of its first-created nature; nor can it have its purity and perfection in any other way than

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in and by the spirit of love. For as love is the God that created all things, so love is the purity, the perfection, and blessing of all created things; and nothing can live in God but as it lives in love. Look at every vice, pain, and disorder in human nature, it is in itself nothing else but the spirit of the creature turned from the universality of love to some self-seeking or own will in created things. So that love alone is, and only can be, the cure of every evil; and he that lives in the purity of love is risen out of the power of evil into the freedom of the one spirit of heaven. The schools have given us very accurate definitions of every vice, whether it be covetousness, pride, wrath, envy, etc., and shown us how to conceive them, as notionally distinguished from one another. But the Christian has a much shorter way of knowing their nature and power, and what they all are, and do, in and to himself. For, call them by what names you will, or distinguish them with ever so much exactness, they are all, separately and jointly, just that same one thing, and all do that same one work, as the scribes, the pharisees, hypocrites, and rabble of the Jews, who crucified Christ, were all but one and the same thing, and all did one and the same work, however different they were in outward names. If you would, therefore, have a true

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sense of the nature and power of pride, wrath, covetousness, envy, etc., they are in their whole nature nothing else but the murderers and crucifiers of the true Christ of God; not as the high priest did many hundred years ago, nailing his outward humanity to an outward cross, but crucifying afresh the Son of God, the holy Immanuel, who is the Christ, that every man crucifies as often as he gives way to wrath, pride, envy, or covetousness, etc. For every temper or passion that is contrary to the new birth of Christ, and keeps the holy Immanuel from coming to life in the soul, is, in the strictest truth of the words, a murderer and killer of the Lord of life. And where pride, and envy, and hatred, etc., are suffered to live, there the same thing is done, as when Christ was killed, and Barabbas was saved alive. The Christ of God was not then first crucified, when the Jews brought him to the cross; but Adam and Eve were his first real murderers; for the death which happened to them, in the day that they did eat of the earthly tree, was the death of the Christ of God, or the divine life in their souls. For Christ had never come into the world as a second Adam to redeem it, had he not been originally the life, and perfection, and glory, of the first Adam. And he is our atonement and reconciliation with God; because, by and

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through him, brought to life in us, we are set again in that first state of holiness, and have Christ again in us, as our first father had at his creation. For had not Christ been in our first father as a birth of life in him, Adam had been created a mere child of wrath, in the same impurity of nature, in the same enmity with God, and in the same want of an atoning Savior, as we are at this day. For God can have no delight or union with any creature but because his well-beloved Son, the express image of his person, is found in it. This is as true of all unfallen, as of all fallen creatures; the one are redeemed, and the other want no redemption, only through the life of Christ dwelling in them. For as the word, or Son of God, is the Creator of all things, and by him every thing is made that was made, so every thing that is good, and holy in unfallen angels is as much through his living and dwelling in them as every thing that is good and holy in redeemed man is through him. And he is just as much the Preserver, the Strength, and Glory, and Life, of all the thrones and principalities of heaven as he is the Righteousness, the Peace, and Redemption of fallen man.

This Christ of God hath many names in Scripture; but they all mean only this, that he is, and alone can be, the Light, and Life, and

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Holiness, of every creature that is holy, whether in heaven or on earth. Wherever Christ is not, there is the wrath of nature, or nature left to itself, and its own tormenting strength of life, to feel nothing in itself but the vain, restless contrariety of its own working properties. This is the one only origin of hell, and every kind of curse and misery in the creature. It is nature without the Christ of God, or the spirit of love, ruling over it. And here you may observe, that wrath has in itself the nature of hell; and that it can have no beginning or power in any creature, but so far as it has lost the Christ of God. And when Christ is everywhere, wrath and hatred will be nowhere. Whenever, therefore, you willingly indulge wrath, or let your mind work in hatred, you not only work without Christ, but you resist him and withstand his redeeming power over you; you do in reality what those Jews did, when they said, We will not have this man to reign over us. For Christ never was nor can be, in any creature, but purely as a Spirit of love.

In all the universe of nature nothing but heaven and heavenly creatures ever had, or could have, been known, had every created will continued in that state in which it came forth out of and from God. For God can

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will nothing in the life of the creature, but a creaturely manifestation of his own goodness, happiness, and perfection. And, therefore, where this is wanted, the fact is certain, that the creature hath changed and lost its first state that it had from God. Every thing, therefore, which is the vanity, the wrath, the torment, and evil of man, or any intelligent creature, is solely the effect of his will turned from God, and can come from nothing else. Misery and wickedness can have no other ground or root; for whatever wills and works with God, must of all necessity partake of the happiness and perfection of God.

This, therefore, is a certain truth, that hell and death, curse and misery, can never cease or be removed from the creation, till the will of the creature is again as it came from God, and is only a spirit of love that willeth nothing but goodness. All the whole fallen creation, stand it never so long, must groan and travel in pain; this must be its purgatory, till every contrariety to the divine will is entirely taken from every creature.

Which is only saying, that all the powers and properties of nature are a misery to themselves, can only work in disquiet and wrath, till the birth of the Son of God brings them under the dominion and power of the spirit of love.

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Thus, sir, you have seen the original, immutable ground and necessity of the spirit of love. It is no imaginary refinement or speculative curiosity; but is of the highest reality and most absolute necessity. It stands in the immutability and perfection of God; and not only every intelligent creature, be it what and where it will, but every inanimate thing, must work in vanity and disquiet till it has its state in and works under the spirit of love. For as love brought forth all things, and all things were what they were, and had their place and state, under the working power of love; so every thing that has lost its first-created state must be in restless strife and disquiet till it finds it again. There is no sort of strife, wrath, or storm in outward nature, no fermentation, vegetation, or corruption in any elementary things, but what is a full proof and real effect of this truth, *viz.*, that nature can have no rest, but must be in the strife of fermentation, vegetation, and corruption, constantly doing and undoing, building and destroying, till the spirit of love has rectified all outward nature, and brought it back again into that glassy sea of unity and purity in which St. John beheld the throne of God in the midst of it. For this glassy sea, which the beloved apostle was blest with the sight of, is the transparent, heav-

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only element in which all the properties and powers of nature move and work in the unity and purity of the one will of God, only known as so many endless forms of triumphing light and love. For the strife of properties, of thick against thin, hard against soft, hot against cold, etc., had no existence till angels fell, that is, till they turned from God to work with nature. This is the original of all the strife, division, and materiality in the fallen world.

No fluid in this world ferments but because there is some thickness and contrariety in it, which it would not have. And it ferments only for this reason, to have a unity and clearness in itself, which its nature wants to have. Now when you see this in any fluid, you see the work of all fallen nature, and the same that every thing else is doing, as well as it can, in its own way; it is in a restless working and strife after a unity and purity, which it can neither have nor forbear to seek. And the reason why all things are doing thus is this; because all the elements of this world, before they were brought down into their present state, had their birth and existence in the unity and purity of the heavenly glassy sea; and therefore must be always in some sort of strife and tendency after their first state, and doomed to disquiet till it is found.

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This is the desire of all fallen nature in this world; it can not be separated from it; but every part must work in fermentation, vegetation, and corruption, till it is restored to its first unity and purity under the spirit of love.

Every son of fallen Adam is under this same necessity of working and striving after something that he neither is nor hath; and for the same reason, because the life of man has lost its first unity and purity, and therefore must be in a working strife, till all contrariety and impurity is separated from it, and it finds its first state in God. All evil, as well as good men, all the wisdom and folly of this life, are equally a proof of this. For the vanity of wicked men in their various ways, and the labors of good men in faith and hope, etc., proceed from the same cause; *viz.*, from a want and desire of having and being something that they neither are nor have. The evil seek wrong, and the good seek right; but they both are seekers, and for the same reason; because their present state has not that which it wants to have. And this must be the state of human life, and of every creature that has fallen from its first state, or has something in it that it should not have. It must do as the polluted fluid does; it must ferment and work, either right

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or wrong, to mend its state. The muddled wine always works right to the utmost of its power, because it works according to nature; but if it had an intelligent free-will, it might work as vainly as man does; it might continually thicken itself, be always stirring up its own dregs, and then it would seek for its purity, just as well as the soul of man seeks for its happiness, in the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. All which must of the same necessity fall away from the heart of man, before it can find its happiness in God, as the dregs must separate from the wine before it can have its perfection and clearness.

Purification, therefore, is the one thing necessary, and nothing will do in the stead of it. But man is not purified till every earthly, wrathful, sensual, selfish, partial, self-willing temper is taken from him. He is not dying to himself till he is dying to these tempers; and he is not alive in God till he is dead to them. For he wants purification only because he has these tempers. And, therefore, he has not the purification which he wants till they are all separated from him. It is the purity and perfection of the divine nature that must be brought again into him; because in that purity and perfection he came forth from God, and could have no less, as he was a

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child of God, that was to be blest by a life in him and from him. For nothing impure or imperfect in its will and working can have any union with God: nor are you to think, that these words, the purity and perfection of God, are too high to be used on this occasion; for they only mean that the will of the creature, as an offspring of the divine will, must will and work with the will of God, for then it stands and lives truly and really in the purity and perfection of God; and whatever does not thus is at enmity with God, and can not have any union of life and happiness with him and in him.

Now, nothing wills and works with God but the spirit of love, because nothing else works in God himself. The Almighty brought forth all nature for this only end, that boundless love might have its infinity of height and depth to dwell and work in; and all the striving and working properties of nature are only to give essence and substance, life and strength, to the invisible hidden spirit of love, that it may come forth into outward activity and manifest its blessed powers; that creatures, born in the strength and out of the powers of nature, might communicate the spirit of love and goodness, give and receive mutual delight and joy to and from one another. All below this state of love is a fall from the

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one life of God, and the only life in which the God of love can dwell. Partiality, self, mine, thine, etc., are tempers that can only belong to creatures that have lost the power, presence, and spirit of the universal good. They can have no place in heaven, nor can be anywhere but because heaven is lost. Think not, therefore, that the spirit of pure, universal love, which is the one purity and perfection of heaven and all heavenly natures, has been, or can be, carried too high, or its absolute necessity too much asserted. For it admits of no degrees of higher or lower, and is not in being till it is absolutely pure and unmixed, no more than a line can be straight till it is absolutely free from all crookedness.

All the design of Christian redemption is to remove every thing that is unheavenly, gross, dark, wrathful, and disordered, from every part of this fallen world. And when you see earth and stones, storms and tempests, and every kind of evil, misery, and wickedness, you see that which Christ came into the world to remove, and not only to give a new birth to fallen man, but also to deliver all outward nature from its present vanity and evil, and set it again in its first heavenly state. Now, if you ask, How came all things into this evil and vanity? it is, because they have lost the blessed spirit of love, which alone

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makes the happiness and perfection of every power of nature. Look at grossness, coldness, hardness, and darkness; they never could have had any existence but because the properties of nature must appear in this manner, when the light of God is no longer dwelling in them.¹

Nature is at first only spiritual; it has in itself nothing but the spiritual properties of the desire which is the very being and ground of nature. But when these spiritual properties are not filled, and blest, and all held in one will, by the light and love of God ruling in them, then something is found in nature which never should have been found; *viz.*, the properties of nature in a state of visible, palpable division and contrariety to each other. And this new state of the properties of nature is the first beginning and birth and possibility of all that contrariety that is to be found betwixt hot and cold, hard and soft, thick and thin, etc., all which could have had no existence till the properties of nature lost their first unity and purity under the light and love of God, man-

¹ The devotional reader may well pass at once to p. 206, the intervening pages expounding the views of matter held by most physicists of the writer's time. The editors deemed it wise, however, not to omit the passage, since it illumines much of the author's method and basis of thought and illustration.

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ifested and working in them. And this is the one true origin of all the materiality of this earthly system, and of every struggle and contrariety that is found in material things. Had the properties of nature been kept by the creature in their first state, blest and overcome with the light and love of heaven dwelling and working in them, no wrath or contrariety could ever have been known by any creature; and had not wrath and contrariety entered into the properties of nature, nothing thick, or hard, or dark, etc., could ever have been found or known in any place. Now every thing that you see and know of the things of this world shows you that matter began only in and from the change of the spiritual properties of nature; and that matter is changed and altered just as the light and purity of heaven is more or less in it. How comes the flint to be in such a state of hard, dark compaction? It is because the meekness and fluidity of the light, and air, and water of this world have little or no existence in it. And therefore, as soon as the fire has unlocked its hard compaction, and opened in it the light and air and water of this world, it becomes transparent glass, and is brought so much nearer to that first glassy sea in which it once existed. For the light, and air, and water of this world, tho all of them in a

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material state yet have the most of the first heavenly nature in them; and as these are, more or less, in all material things, so are they nearer or farther from their first heavenly state. And as a fire is the first deliverer of the flint from its hard compaction, so the last universal fire must begin the deliverance of this material system, and fit every thing to receive that spirit of light and love, which will bring all things back again to their first glassy sea, in which the deity dwelleth as in his throne. And thus, as the earthly fire turns flint into glass, so earth will become heaven, and the contrariety of four divided elements will become one transparent brightness of glory, as soon as the last fire shall have melted every grossness into its first undivided fluidity, for the light, and love, and majesty of God to be all in all in it. How easy and natural is it to suppose all that is earth and stones to be dissolved into water, the water to be changed into air, the air into ether, and the ether rarefied into light? Is there any thing here impossible to be supposed? And how near a step is the next, to suppose all this changed or exalted into that glassy sea, which was everywhere before the angels fell? What now is become of hard, heavy, dead, divisible, corruptible matter? Is it annihilated? No: And yet nothing of it is

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left; all that you know of it is gone, and nothing but its shadowy idea will be known in eternity. Now as this shows you how matter can lose all its material properties, and go back to its first spiritual state, so it makes it very intelligible to you, how the sin of angels, which was their sinful working in and with the properties of nature could bring them out of their first spirituality into that darkness, grossness, and chaos, out of which God raised this material system. See now, sir, how unreasonably you once told me, that our doctrine must suppose the eternity of matter; for throughout the whole you might easily have seen that it neither does nor can suppose it, but demonstrates the impossibility of it; shows the true origin of matter, that it is no older than sin; could have no possibility of beginning to be but from sin; and therefore must entirely vanish when sin is entirely done away.

If matter, said you, be not made out of nothing, then it must be eternal. Just as well concluded as if you had said, If snow, and hail, and ice, are not made out of nothing, then they must be eternal. And if your senses did not force you to know how these things are created out of something, and are in themselves only the properties of light, and air, and water, brought out of their first state into

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such a compaction and creation as is called snow, hail, and ice, your rational philosophy would stand to its noble conclusion that they must be made out of nothing. Now every time you see snow or hail or ice, you see in truth and reality the creation of matter, or how this world came to be of such a material nature as it is. For earth and stones, and every other materiality of this world, came from some antecedent properties of nature, by that same creating power or fiat of God as turns the properties of light, and air, and water into the different materialities of snow, hail, and ice.

The first property of nature, which is in itself a constringing, attracting, compressing, and coagulating power, is that working power from whence comes all thickness, darkness, coldness, and hardness; and this is the creator of snow and hail and ice out of something that before was only the fluidity of light, air, and moisture. Now this same property of nature, directed by the will of God, was the fiat and creating power which, on the first day of this world, compacted, coagulated, or created, the wrathful properties of fallen nature in the angelic kingdom into such a new state as to become earth, and stones, and water, and a visible heaven. And the new state of the created heaven and earth

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and stones and water, etc., came forth by the fiat of God, or the working of the first property of nature, from the properties of fallen nature; just as snow and ice and hail come forth by the same fiat from the properties of light, air, and water. And the created materiality of heaven, earth, stones, and water have no more eternity in them than there is in snow, or hail, or ice; but are only held for a time in their compacted or created state, by the same first astringing property of nature which for a time holds snow, and hail, and ice in their compacted state.

Now here you see with the utmost certainty that all the matter or materiality of this world is the effect of sin, and could have its beginning from nothing else. For as thickness, hardness, and darkness (which is the essence of matter) is the effect of the wrathful, predominant power of the first property of nature, and as no property of nature can be predominant or known as it is in itself till nature is fallen from its harmonious unity, under the light and love of God dwelling in it, so you have the utmost certainty that where matter, or (which is the same thing) where thickness, darkness, hardness, etc., are found, there the will of the creature has turned from God, and opened a disorderly working of nature without God.

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Therefore, as sure as the materiality of this world standeth in the predominant power of the first attracting, astringing property of nature, or, in other words, is a thickness, darkness, hardness, etc., so sure is it that all the matter of this world has its beginning from sin, and must have its end as soon as the properties of nature are again restored to their first unity and blessed harmony under the light and Spirit of God.

It is no objection to all this that Almighty God must be owned to be the true Creator of the materiality of this world. For God only brought or created it into this materiality out of the fallen, sinful properties of nature, and in order to stop their sinful working, and to put them into a state of recovery. He created the confused chaos of the darkened, divided, contrary properties of spiritual nature into a farther, darker, harder coagulation and division, that so, the fallen angels might thereby lose all power over them; and that this new materiality might become a theater of redemption, and stand its time, under the dominion of the Lamb of God, till all the wrath and grossness and darkness, born of the sin of angels, was fitted to return to its first heavenly purity.

And thus, tho God is the creator of the materiality of this world, yet seeing he created

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it out of that wrath, division, and darkness which sin had opened in nature, this truth stands firm, that sin alone is the father, first cause, and beginner of all the materiality of this world; and that when sin is removed from nature, all its materiality must vanish with it. For when the properties of nature are again in the unity of the one will of light and love, then hot and cold, thick and thin, dark and hard, with every other property of matter, must give up all their distinction, and all the divided elements of this world lose all their materiality and division in that first heavenly spirituality of a glassy sea from whence they fell.

Now as all the whole nature of matter, its grossness, darkness, and hardness, is owing to the unequal, predominant working of the first property of nature, which is an attracting, astringing, and compressing desire, so every spiritual evil, every wicked working and disorderly state of any intelligent being is all owing to the same disorderly, predominant power of the first property of nature, doing all that inwardly in the spirit of the creature, which it does in an outward grossness, darkness, and hardness. Thus, when the desire (the first property of nature) in any intelligent creature leaves the unity and universality of the spirit of love, and contracts or

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shuts up itself in an own will, own love, and self-seeking, then it does all that inwardly and spiritually in the soul which it does in outward grossness, hardness, and darkness. And had not own will, own love, and self-seeking come into the spirit of the creature, it never could have found, or felt, any outward contrariety, darkness, or hardness. For no creature can have any other outward nature but that which is in the same state with its inward spirit, and belongs to it as its own natural growth.

Modern metaphysics has no knowledge of the ground and nature either of spirit or body; but supposes them not only without any natural relation, but essentially contrary to one another, and only held together in a forced conjunction by the arbitrary will of God. Nay if you were to say that God first creates a soul out of nothing, and when that is done, then takes an understanding faculty and puts it into it, after that adds a will, and then a memory, all as independently made, as when a tailor first makes the body of a coat, and then adds sleeves or pockets to it; were you to say this, the schools of Descartes, Malebranche, or Locke, could have nothing to say against it. And the thing is unavoidable; for all these philosophers were so far from knowing the ground of nature, how it is a birth

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from God, and all creatures a birth from nature through the working will of God, in and by the powers of nature, as they were so far from knowing this, as to hold a creation out of nothing; so they were necessarily excluded from every fundamental truth concerning the origin either of body or spirit, and their true relation to one another. For a creation out of nothing leaves no room for accounting why any thing is as it is. Now every wise man is supposed to have respect to nature in every thing that he would have joined together; he can not suppose his work to succeed unless this be done. But to suppose God to create man with a body and soul not only not naturally related, but naturally impossible to be united by any powers in either of them, is to suppose God acting and creating man into an unnatural state; which yet he could not do, unless there was such a thing as nature antecedent to the creation of man. And how can nature be or have any thing but what it is and has from God? Therefore, to suppose God to bring any creature into an unnatural state is to suppose him acting contrary to himself, and to that nature which is from him.

Yet all the metaphysics of the schools does this; it supposes God to bring a soul and a body together which have the utmost natural

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contrariety to each other, and can only affect or act upon one another by an arbitrary will of God, willing that body and soul, held together by force, should seem to do that to one another which they have no natural or possible power to do. But the true philosophy of this matter, known only to the soul, that by a new birth from above has found its first state in and from God, is this: namely, that nature is a birth or manifestation of the triune invisible deity. And as it could only come into existence as a birth from God, so every creature or beginning thing, can only come forth as a birth from and out of nature, by the will of God, willing it to come forth in such a birth. And no creature can have or be any thing but by and according to the working powers of nature; and therefore, strictly speaking, no creature can be or be put into an unnatural state. It may indeed lose or fall from its natural perfection, by the wrong use or working of its will; but then its fallen state is the natural effect of the wrong use of its will, and so it only has that which is natural to it. The truth of the matter is this: there neither is nor can be any thing nor any effect in the whole universe of things but by the way of birth. For as the working will is the first cause, or beginner, of every thing, so nothing can pro-

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ceed farther than as it is driven by the will, and is a birth of it. And, therefore, nothing can be in any thing but what is natural to its own working will and the true effect of it. Every thing that is outward in any being is only a birth of its own spirit; and, therefore, all body, whether it be heavenly, or earthly, or hellish, has its whole nature and condition from its own inward spirit; and no spirit can have a body of any other properties but such as are natural to it, as being its own true outward state. For body and spirit are not two separate, independent things, but are necessary to each other, and are only the inward and outward conditions of one and the same being.

Every creaturely spirit must have its own body, and can not be without it; for its body is that which makes it manifest to itself. It can not be said to exist as a creature till in a body, because it can have no sensibility of itself, nor feel, nor find either that it is, or what it is, but in and by its own body. Its body is its first knowledge of its something and somewhere.

And now, sir, if you ask why I have gone into this detail of the origin and nature of body and spirit, when my subject was only concerning the spirit of love, it is to show you that grossness, darkness, contrariety,

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disquiet, and fermentation must be the state of the body and spirit, till they are both made pure and luminous by the light and love of heaven manifested in them. All darkness, grossness, and contrariety must be removed from the body before it can belong to heaven or be united with it; but these qualities must be in the body till the soul is totally dead to self, partiality, and contrariety, and breathes only the spirit of universal love, because the state of the body has nothing of its own or from itself, but is solely the outward manifestation of nothing else but that which is inwardly in the soul. Every animal of this world has nothing in its outward form or shape; every spirit, whether heavenly or hellish, has nothing in the nature and state of its body, but that which is the form and growth of its own inward spirit. As no number can be any thing else but that which the unities contained in it make it to be; so no body of any creature can be any thing else but the coagulation or sum total, of those properties of nature that are coagulated in it. And when the properties of nature are formed into the band of a creaturely union, then is its body brought forth, whether the spirit of the creature be earthly, heavenly, or hellish.

Nature, or the first properties of life, are in a state of the highest contrariety and the

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highest want of something which they have not. This is their whole nature, and they have nothing else in them. And this is their true ground and fitness to become a life of triumphing joy and happiness; *viz.*, when united in the possession of that which they seek for in their contrariety. And if life, in its first root, was not this depth of strife, this strength of hunger and sensibility of want, the fulness of heavenly joy could not be manifested in it.

You are not a stranger to the mystery of the seven properties of nature, which we have often spoken of; and therefore I shall shorten the matter, and only say so much of them as may be of service to our present subject.

Nature, whether eternal or temporal, is that which comes not into being for its own self, or to be that which it is in itself, but for the sake of something that it is not and has not. And this is the reason why nature is only a desire; it is because it is for the sake of something else; and is also the reason why nature in itself is only a torment, because it is only a strong desire, and can not help itself to that which it wants, but is always working against itself.

Now a desire that can not be stopt, nor get that which it would have, has a threefold

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contrariety or working in it, which you may thus conceive, as follows: the first and peculiar property, or the one only will of the desire, as such, is to have that which it has not; and all that it can do toward having it is to act as if it were seizing it; and this is it which makes the desire to be a magic compressing, inclosing, or astringing; because that is all that it can do toward seizing of that which it would have. But the desire can not thus magically astringe, compress, or strive to inclose without drawing and attracting: but drawing is motion, which is the highest contrariety and resistance to compressing or holding together. And thus the desire, in its magical working, sets out with two contrary properties, inseparable from one another and equal in strength; for the motion has no strength but as it is the drawing of the desire; and the desire only draws in the same degree as it wills to compress and astringe; and therefore the desire, as astringing, always begets a resistance equal to itself. Now from this great and equally strong contrariety of the two first properties of the desire, magically pulling, as I may say, two contrary ways, there arises as a necessary birth from both of them a third property, which is emphatically called a wheel or whirling anguish of life. For a thing that can

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go neither inward nor outward, and yet must be and move under the equal power of both of them, must whirl or turn round; it has no possibility of doing any thing else, or of ceasing to do that. And this whirling contrariety of these inseparable properties is the great anguish of life, and may properly be called the hell of nature; and every lesser torment which any man finds in this mixed world has all its existence and power from the working of these three properties: for life can find no troublesome motions, or sensibility of distress, but so far as it comes under their power and enters into their whirling wheel.

Now here you may observe that, as this whirling anguish of life is a third state, necessarily arising from the contrariety of the two first properties of the desire; so in this material system, every whirling or orbicular motion of any body is solely the effect or product of the contrariety of these two first properties. For no material thing can whirl or move round till it is under the power of these two properties; that is, till it can neither go inward nor outward, and yet is obliged to move; just as the whirling anguish of the desire then begins when it can neither go inward nor outward, and yet must be in motion.

And this may be again another strict dem-

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onstration to you that all the matter of this world is from spiritual properties, since all its workings and effects are according to them. For if matter does nothing but according to them, it can be nothing but what it is and has from them.

Here also, that is, in these three properties of the desire, you see the ground and reason of the three great laws of matter and motion, lately discovered and so much celebrated; and need no more to be told that the illustrious Sir Isaac plowed with Behmen's² heifer, when he brought forth the discovery of them. In the mathematical system of this great philosopher, these three properties, attraction, equal resistance, and the orbicular motion of the planets as the effect of them, etc., are only treated of as facts and appearances, whose ground is not pretended to be known. But in our Behmen, the illuminated instrument of God, their birth and power in eternity is opened; their eternal beginning is shown, and how and why all worlds, and every life of every creature, whether it be heavenly, earthly, or hellish, must be in them and from them, and can have no nature either spiritual or material, no kind of happiness or misery, but according to the working power and state of these properties.

²For Behmen (Boehme), see Vol. 5, pp. 151 ff.

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All outward nature, all inward life, is what it is, and works as it works, from this unceasing, powerful attraction, resistance, and whirling.

Every madness and folly of life is their immediate work, and every good spirit of wisdom and love has all its strength and activity from them. They equally support darkness and light: the one could have no powers of thickness and coldness, the other no powers of warmth, brightness, and activity, but by and through these three properties acting in a different state. Not a particle of matter stirs, rises, or falls, separates from, or unites with any other, but under their power. Not a thought of the mind, either of love or hatred, of joy or trouble, of envy or wrath, of pride and covetousness, can rise in the spirit of any creature, but as these properties act and stir in it.

The next and following properties, *viz.*, the fourth, called fire; the fifth, called the form of light and love; and the sixth, sound or understanding, only declare the gradual effects of the entrance of the deity into the three first properties of nature, changing or bringing their strong wrathful attraction, resistance, and whirling into a life and state of triumphing joy and fulness of satisfaction; which state of peace and joy in one another

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is called the seventh property, or state of nature. And this is what Behmen means by his "Ternarius Sanctus," which he so often speaks of, as the only place from whence he received all that he said and writ: he means by it the holy manifestation of the triune God in the seven properties of nature, or kingdom of heaven. And from this manifestation of God in the seven properties of nature, or kingdom of heaven, he most wonderfully opens and accounts for all that was done in the six first working days of the creation, showing how every one of the six active properties had its peculiar day's work, till the whole ended, or rested, in the sanctified, paradisaical sabbath of the seventh day, just as nature doth in its seventh property.

And now, sir, you may see, in the greatest clearness, how every thing in this world, every thing in the soul and body of man, absolutely requires the one redemption of the gospel. There is but one nature in all created things, whether spiritual or material; they all stand and work upon the same ground; *viz.*, the three first properties of nature. That only which can illuminate the soul, that alone can give brightness and purity to the body. For there is no grossness, darkness, and contrariety in the body, but what strictly proceeds from the same cause that makes selfishness,

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wrath, envy, and torment in the soul; it is but one and the same state and working of the same three first properties of nature. All evil, whether natural or moral, whether of body or spirit, is the sole effect of the wrath and disorder of the spirits of nature working in and by themselves. And all the good, perfection, and purity of every thing, whether spiritual or material, whether it be the body or spirit of man or angel, is solely from the power and presence of the supernatural deity dwelling and working in the properties of nature. For the properties of nature are in themselves nothing else but a mere hunger, want, strife, and contrariety, till the fulness and riches of the deity, entering into them, unites them all in one will and one possession of light and harmonious love; which is the one redemption of the gospel, and the one reason why nothing else but the heart, or Son, or light of God can purify nature and creature from all the evil they are fallen into.

For nothing can possibly deliver the soul from its selfish nature and earthly passions but that one power that can deliver matter from its present material properties, and turn earth into heaven. And that for this plain reason; because soul and body, outward nature and inward life, have but one and the

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same evil in them, and from one and the same cause.

The deist, therefore, who looks for life and salvation through the use of his reason, acts contrary to the whole nature of every thing that he sees and knows of himself, and of the nature and state of this world. For, from one end of it to the other, all its material state, all its gross divided elements declare that they are what they are because the light and love of heaven is not working and manifest in them; and that nothing can take darkness, materiality, rage, storms, and tempests from them but that same heavenly Light and Love which was made flesh, to redeem the fallen humanity first, and after that the whole material system.

Can the deist, with his reason, bring the light of this world into the eyes of his body? If not, how comes it to be less absurd, or more possible, for reason to bring heavenly light into the soul? Can reason hinder the body from being heavy, or remove thickness and darkness from flesh and blood? Yet nothing less than such a power can possibly help the soul out of its fallen and earthly state. For the grossness of flesh and blood is the natural state of the fallen soul; and therefore nothing can purify the soul, or raise it out of its earthly, corrupt state, but that which hath

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all power over all that is earthly and material in nature.

To pretend, therefore, that reason may have sufficient power to remove all hellish depravity and earthly lusts from the soul, whilst it has not the least power over sweet or sour in any one particle of matter in the body is as highly absurd as if a man should pretend, that he has a full power to alter the inward, invisible, vegetable life of a plant, but none at all over its outward state, color, leaves, or fruit. The deist, therefore, and not the Christian, stands in need of continual miracles to make good his doctrine. For reason can have no pretense to amend or alter the life of the soul but so far as it can show that it has power to amend and alter the nature and state of the body.

The unbelieving Jews said of our Lord, How can this man forgive sins? Christ showed them how, by appealing to that power which they saw he had over the body: Whether, says he, is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But the delusion of the unbelieving deist is greater than that of the Jew. For the deist sees that his reason has no power over his body; can remove no disease, blindness, deafness, or lameness from it; and yet will pretend to have power enough from his

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reason to help the soul out of all its evil; not knowing that body and soul go hand in hand, and are nothing else but the inward and outward state of one and the same life; and that, therefore, he only who can say to the dead body of Lazarus, Come forth, can say to the soul, Be thou clean. The deist, therefore, if he pleases, may style himself a natural or a moral philosopher, but with no more truth than he can call himself a healer of all the maladies of the body. And for a man to think himself a moral philosopher, because he has made a choice collection of syllogisms in order to quicken and revive a divine goodness in the soul; or that no redeemer need come from heaven, because human reason, when truly left to itself, has great skill in chopping of logic; may justly be deemed such an ignorance of the nature of things as is seldom found in the transactions of illiterate and vulgar life.

To return to our chief subject: the sum of all that has been said is this: all evil, be it what it will, all misery of every kind, is in its birth, working, and extent nothing else but nature left to itself, and under the divided workings of its own hunger, wrath, and contrariety; and therefore no possibility for the natural, earthly man to escape eternal hunger, wrath, and contrariety, but solely in the way

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as the gospel teacheth, by denying and dying to self. On the other hand, all the goodness and perfection, all the happiness, glory, and joy, that any intelligent, divine creature can be possest of is, and can be, from nothing else but the invisible uncreated light and Spirit of God manifesting itself in the properties of the creaturely life, filling, blessing, and uniting them all in one love and joy of life. And thus again; no possibility of man's attaining to any heavenly perfection and happiness, but only in the way of the gospel, by the union of the divine and human nature, by man's being born again from above of the Word and Spirit of God. There is no possibility of any other way, because there is nothing that can possibly change the first properties of life into an heavenly state but the presence and working power of the Deity united with and working in them. And therefore the Word was made flesh, and must of all necessity be made flesh, if man is to have an heavenly nature. Now as all evil, sin, and misery have no beginning nor power of working but in the manifestation of nature in its divided, contrary properties; so it is certain that man has nothing to turn to, seek, or aspire after but the lost spirit of love. And therefore it is that God only can be his Redeemer; because God only is Love; and love

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can be nowhere else but in God, and where God dwelleth and worketh.

Now the difficulty which you find in attaining to this purity and universality of the spirit of love is because you seek for it, as I once told you, in the way of reasoning. You would be possest of it only from a rational conviction of the fitness and amiableness of it. And as this clear idea does not put you immediately into the real possession of it, your reason begins to waver, and suggests to you that it may be only a fine notion, that has no ground but in the power of imagination. But this, sir, is all your own error, and as contrary to nature as if you would have your eyes do that which only your hands or feet can do for you. The spirit of love is a spirit of nature and life; and all the operations of nature and life are according to the working powers of nature; and every growth and degree of life can only arise in its own time and place from its proper cause, and as the genuine effect of it. Nature and life do nothing by chance, or accidentally, but every thing in one uniform way. Fire, air, and light do not proceed sometimes from one thing and sometimes from another; but wherever they are, they are always born in the same manner, and from the same working in the properties of nature. So in like man-

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ner, love is an immutable birth, always proceeding from the same cause, and can not be in existence till its own true parents have brought it forth.

How unreasonable would it be to begin to doubt whether strength and health of body were real things, or possible to be had, because you could not by the power of your reason take possession of them? Yet this is as well as to suspect the purity and perfection of love to be only a notion, because your reason can not bring forth its birth in your soul. For reason has no more power of altering the life and properties of the soul than of altering the life and properties of the body. That, and that only, can cast devils and evil spirits out of the soul, that can say to the storm, Be still; and to the leper, Be thou clean.

The birth of love is a form or state of life, and has its fixt place in the fifth form of nature. The three first properties or forms of nature are the ground or band of life, that is in itself only an extreme hunger, want, strife, and contrariety. And they are in this state, that they may become a proper fuel for the fourth form of nature, *viz.*, the fire, to be kindled in them. You will perhaps say, What is this fire? What is its nature? And how is it kindled? And how is it, that the hunger and anguishing state of the properties

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are a fitness to be a fuel of this fire? It may be answered, This hunger and anguish of nature, in its first forms, is its fitness to be changed into a life of light, joy, and happiness. And that for this reason; because it is in this hunger and anguish only because God is not in it. For as nature comes from God, and for this only end, that the Deity may manifest heaven in it, it must stand in an hunger and anguishing state till the Deity is manifested in it. And therefore its hunger and anguish is its true fitness to be changed into a better state; and this is its fitness for the birth of the fire: for the fire means nothing, and is nothing else, but that which changes them into a better state. Not as if fire was a fourth distinct thing that comes into them from without, but is only a fourth state or condition, into which the same properties are brought.

The fire then is that which changes the properties into a new and heavenly state. Therefore, the fire does two things; it alters the state of nature, and brings heaven into it; and therefore it must work from a twofold power, the Deity and nature must both be in it. It must have some strength from nature, or it could not work in nature; it must have some strength from the Deity, or it could not overcome and change nature into a

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divine life. Now all this is only to show you that the fire can only be kindled by the entrance of the Deity, or supernatural God, into a conjunction or union with nature. And this conjunction of the Deity and nature maketh, or bringeth forth, that state or form of life which is called, and truly is, fire. First, because it does that in the spiritual properties of nature which fire doth in the properties of material nature; and, secondly, because it is that alone from which every fire in this world, whether in the life of animal, or vegetable, or inanimate matter, has its source, and power, and possibility of burning. The fire of this world overcomes its fuel, breaks its nature, alters its state, and changes it into flame and light. But why does it do this? Whence has it this nature and power? It is because it is a true outbirth of the eternal fire, which overcomes the darkness, wrath, and contrariety of nature, and changes all its properties into a life of light, joy, and glory. Not a spark of fire could be kindled in this world, nor a ray of light come from any material fire, but because material nature is, in itself, nothing else but the very properties of eternal nature, standing for a time in a material state or condition; and therefore they must work in time, as they do in eternity; and consequently there must be fire in this

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world, it must have the same birth and do the same work, in its material way, which the eternal fire hath and doth in spiritual nature. And this is the true ground and reason why every thing in this world is delivered as far as it can be, from its earthly impurity, and brought into its highest state of existence only by fire; it is because the eternal fire is the purifier of eternal nature, and the opener of every perfection, light, and glory in it. And if you ask why the eternal fire is the purifier of eternal nature, the reason is plain; it is because the eternal fire has its birth and nature and power from the entrance of the pure, supernatural Deity into the properties of nature, which properties must change their state, and be what they were not before, as soon as the Deity entereth into them. Their darkness, wrath, and contrariety is driven out of them, and they work and give forth only a life and strength of light, and joy, and glory. And this twofold operation, *viz.*, on one hand taking from nature its wrathful workings, and on the other hand opening a glorious manifestation of the Deity in them, is the whole nature and form of the fire, and is the reason why from eternity to eternity it is, and must be, the purifier of eternal nature; namely, as from eternity to eternity changing nature into a kingdom of heaven.

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Now every fire in this world does, and must do, the same thing in its low way, to the utmost of its power, and can do nothing else. Kindle fire where or in what you will, it acts only as from and by the power of this eternal purifying fire; and therefore it breaks and consumes the grossness of every thing, and makes all that is pure and spirituous to come forth out of it; and therefore purification is its one only work through all material nature, because it is a real outbirth of that eternal fire which purifies eternal nature and changes it into a mere heaven of glory.

The eternal fire is called a fourth form or state of nature, because it can not exist but from the first three, and hath its work in the fourth place, in the midst of the seven forms, changing the three first into the three last forms of nature; that is, changing them from their natural into a heavenly state. So that, strictly speaking, there are but three forms of nature, in answerableness to the threefold working of the triune Deity. For the three last are not three new or different properties, but are only the three first brought into a new state, by the entrance of the triune Deity into conjunction with them. Which entrance of the supernatural Deity into them is the consuming of all that is bad in them, and

turning all their strength into a working life of light, joy, and heavenly glory; and therefore has the justest title to be called fire, as having no other nature and operation in it but the known nature of fire, and also as being that from which every fire in this world has all its nature and power of doing as it doth.

You once, as I remember, objected to my speaking so much . . . of the fire of life, as thinking it too gross an expression to be taken in its literal meaning, when mention is made of the eternal fire, or the fire in animal life. But, sir, fire has but one nature through the whole universe of things; and material fire has not more or less of the nature of fire in it than that which is in eternal nature; because it has nothing, works nothing, but what it has and works from thence. How easy was it for you to have seen that the fire of the soul, and the fire of the body, had but one nature? How else could they unite in their heat? How easy also to have seen that the fire of animal life was the same fire that burns in the kitchen? How else could the kitchen fire be serviceable to animal life? What good could it do you to come to a fire of wood, where you wanted to have the heat of your own life increased? In animal life, the fire is kindled and preserved in such a

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degree, and in such circumstances, as to be life and the preservation of life; and this is its difference from fire kindled in wood and burning it to ashes. It is the same fire, only in a different state, that keeps up life and consumes wood; and has no other nature in the wood than in the animal. Just as in water that has only so much fire in it as to make it warm and water that is by fire made boiling hot, the same nature and power of fire is in both, but only in a different state. Now will you say, that fire is not to be literally understood, when it only makes water to be warm, because it is not red and flaming as you see it in a burning coal? Yet this would be as well as to say that fire is not literally to be understood in the animal life, because it is so different from that fire which you see burning in a piece of wood. And thus, sir, there is no foundation for any objection to all that has been said of fire. . . . It is one and the same great power of God in the spiritual and material world; it is the cause of every life, and the opener of every power of nature; and its one great work through all nature and creature, animate and inanimate—purification and exaltation; it can do nothing else, and that for this plain reason, because its birth is from the entrance of the pure Deity into nature; and, therefore, must in its various

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state and degrees be only doing that which the entrance of the Deity into nature does. It must bring every natural thing into its highest state. But to go back now to the spirit of love, and show you the time and place of its birth, before which it can have no existence in your soul, do what you will to have it.

The fire, you see, is the first overcomer of the hungry, wrathful, self-tormenting state of the properties of nature; and it only overcomes them, because it is the entrance of the pure Deity into them; and therefore that which overcomes them is the light of the Deity. And this is the true ground and reason why every right-kindled fire must give forth light, and can not do otherwise. It is because the eternal fire is only the effect or operation of the supernatural light of the Deity entering into nature; and therefore fire must give forth light, because it is itself only a power of the light; and light can be nowhere in nature, but as a fifth form or state of nature, brought forth by the fire. And as light, thus brought forth, is the first state that is lovely and delightful in nature, so the spirit of love has only its birth in the light of life, and can be nowhere else. For the properties of life have no common good, nothing to rejoice in, till the light is found,

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and therefore no possible beginning of the spirit of love till then.

The shock that is given to the three first properties of nature, by the amazing light of the Deity breaking in upon them, is the operation of the fire, that consumes or takes away the wrathful strength and contrariety of the properties, and forces each of them to shrink, as it were, away from itself, and come under the power of this new risen light. Here all strife of enmity and wrathful contrariety in the properties must cease, because all are united in the love of the light, and all equally helping one another to a higher enjoyment and delight in it. They are all one triune will, all doing the same thing, *viz.*, all rejoicing in the one love of the light. And here it is, in this delightful unity of operation, that the spirit of love is born, in the fifth property, or light of life; and can not possibly rise up in any creature, till the properties of its life are brought into this fifth state, thus changed, and exalted into a new sensibility of life. Let me give you this similitude of the matter. Fancy to yourself a man shut up in a deep cave underground, without ever having seen a ray of the light, his body all over tortured with pain, his mind distracted with rage, himself whirling and working with the utmost fury and madness, he knows not

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what; and then you have an image of the first properties of life, as they are in themselves, before the fire had done its work in them.

Fancy this man suddenly struck, or all surrounded, with such a glare of light as, in the twinkling of an eye, stopt or struck dead every working of every pain and rage, both in his body and mind; and then you have an image of the operation of the fire, and what it does to the first properties of nature. Now as soon as the first terror of the light has had its fiery operation, and struck nothing dead but every working sensibility of distress, fancy this man, as you now well may, in the sweetest peace of mind and bodily sensations, blest in a new region of light, giving joy to his mind and gratification to every sense; and then the transports, the overflowings of love and delight in this new state, may give you an image how the spirit of love is and must be born, when fire and light have overcome and changed the state of the first properties of nature, and never, till then, can have any existence in any creature, nor proceed from any other cause. Thus, sir, you may sufficiently see how vainly you attempt to possess yourself of the spirit of love by the power of your reason; and also what a vanity of all vanities there is in the religion of the

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deists, who will have no other perfection or divine life but what they can have from their reason—as great a contradiction to nature as if they would have no life or strength of body but that which can be had from their faculty of reasoning. For reason can no more alter or exalt any one property of life in the soul, and bring it into its perfect state, than it can add one cubit to the stature of the body. The perfection of every life is no way possibly to be had but as every flower comes to its perfection; *viz.*, from its own seed and root and the various degrees of transmutation which must be gone through before the flower is found. It is strictly thus with the perfection of the soul; all its properties of life must have their true natural birth and growth from one another. The first, as its seed and root, must have their natural change into a higher state; must, like the seed of the flower, pass through death into life, and be blest with the fire and light and spirit of heaven in their passage to it; just as the seed passes through death into life, blest by the fire and light and air of this world, till it reaches its last perfection, and becomes a beautiful, sweet-smelling flower. And to think that the soul can attain its perfection any other way than by the change and exaltation of its first properties of life, just as the seed has its first

properties changed and exalted till it comes to have its flower, is a total ignorance of the nature of things. For as whatever dies can not have a death particular to itself, but the same death in the same way, and for the same reasons, that any other creature, whether animal or vegetable, ever did or can die; so every life and degree of life must come into its state and condition of life in the same way, and for the same reasons, as life, and the perfection of life, comes into every other living creature, whether in heaven or on earth. Therefore, the deist's religion or reason, which is to raise the soul to its true perfection, is so far from being the religion of nature that it is quite unnatural, and declared to be so by every working in nature. For since reason can neither give life nor death to any one thing in nature, but every thing lives or dies according to the working of its own properties; every thing, dead and alive, gives forth a demonstration that nature asks no counsel of reason, nor stays to be directed by it. Hold it therefore for a certain truth, that you can have no good come into your soul but only by the one way of a birth from above, from the entrance of the Deity into the properties of your own foulish life. Nature must be set right, its properties must enter into the process of a new birth, it must work to

the production of light, before the spirit of love can have a birth in it. For love is delight, and delight can not arise in any creature till its nature is in a delightful state, or is possess of that, in which it must rejoice. And this is the reason why God must become man; it is because a birth of the Deity must be found in the soul, giving to nature all that it wants, or the soul can never find itself in a delightful state and only working with the spirit of love. For whilst the soul has only its natural life, it can only be in such a state as nature without God is in; *viz.*, a mere hunger, want, contrariety, and strife for it knows not what. Hence is all that variety of blind, restless, contrary passions which govern and torment the life of fallen man. It is because all the properties of nature must work in blindness, and be doing they know not what, till the light of God is found in them. Hence also it is, that that which is called the wisdom, the honor, the honesty, and the religion of the natural man often does as much hurt to himself and others as his pride, ambition, self-love, envy, or revenge, and are subject to the same humor and caprice; it is because nature is no better in one motion than in another, nor can be so, till something supernatural is come into it. We often charge men, both in church

and state, with changing their principles; but the charge is too hasty; for no man ever did or can change his principles, but by a birth from above. The natural, called in Scripture the old man, is steadily the same in heart and spirit in every thing he does, whatever variety of names may be given to his actions. For self can have no motion but what is selfish, which way soever it goes or whatever it does, either in church or state. And be assured of this, that nature in every man, whether he be learned or unlearned, is this very self, and can be nothing else, till a birth of the Deity is brought forth in it. There is, therefore, no possibility of having the spirit of love, or any divine goodness, from any power of nature or working of reason. It can only be had in its own time and place; and its time and place is nowhere but where nature is overcome by a birth of the life of God in the properties of the soul. And thus you see the infallible truth and absolute necessity of Christian redemption; it is the most demonstrable thing in all nature. The Deity must become man, take a birth in the fallen nature, be united to it, become the life of it, or the natural man must of all necessity be for ever and ever in the hell of his own hunger, anguish, contrariety, and self-torment; and all for this plain reason, because nature is and

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can be nothing else but this variety of self-torment, till the Deity is manifested and dwelling in it.

And now, sir, you see also the absolute necessity of the gospel doctrine of the cross, *viz.*, of dying to self, as the one only way to life in God. This cross, or dying to self, is the one morality that does man any good. Fancy as many rules as you will of modeling the moral behavior of man, they all do nothing because they leave nature still alive, and therefore can only help a man to a feigned, hypocritical art of concealing his own inward evil, and seeming to be not under its power. And the reason why it must be so, is plain; it is because nature is not possible to be reformed; it is immutable in its workings, and must be always as it is, and never any better or worse than its own untaught workings are. It can no more change from evil to good than darkness can work itself into light. The one work, therefore, of morality is the one doctrine of the cross; *viz.*, to resist and deny nature, that a supernatural power, or divine goodness, may take possession of it and bring a new light into it.

In a word, there are, in all the possibility of things, but two states or forms of life; the one is nature, and the other is God manifested in nature; and as God and nature are

both within you, so you have it in your power to live and work with which you will; but are under a necessity of doing either the one or the other. There is no standing still, life goes on and is always bringing forth its realities, which way soever it goeth. You have seen that the properties of nature are, and can be, nothing else in their own life but a restless hunger, disquiet, and blind strife for they know not what, till the property of light and love has got possession of them. Now when you see this, you see the true state of every natural man, whether he be Cæsar or Cato, whether he gloriously murders others or only stabs himself, blind nature does all the work, and must be the doer of it, till the Christ of God is born in him. For the life of man can be nothing else but an hunger of covetousness, a rising up of pride, envy, and wrath, a medley of contrary passions, doing and undoing it knows not what, because these workings are essential to the properties of nature; they must be always hungering and working one against another, striving to be above one another, and all this in blindness, till the light of God has helped them to one common good, in which they all willingly unite, rest, and rejoice. In a word, goodness is only a sound, and virtue a mere strife of natural passions till the spirit of

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love is the breath of every thing that lives and moves in the heart. For love is the one only blessing, and goodness, and God of nature; and you have no true religion, are no worshiper of the one true God, but in and by that spirit of love, which is God himself living and working in you.

A Prayer of Michael Sailer

Searcher of all hearts, thou knowest my heart, and how it stands with me. Thou hast made it, thou knowest whether I love thee. All I am or have that has any goodness in it, I am or have alone through thee, for it is all thy work in me; but it must be thine also by the free surrender of my heart. In thy service, and fulfilling thy will, I would fain spend every minute of my life. The thought of thee shall be the sweetest to me of all thoughts; to speak of thee the dearest and best of all I speak or hear; the joy of thy love shall be the inmost joy of my soul. Gladly would I devote my whole being to thee; accept me, then, as a living sacrifice, and give me the mind that was in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father. AMEN.

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